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TEACHER INFLUENCE ON STUDENT RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

BY

SYLVIA J. PANTALEO ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1994

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DEDICATION

To Paul Pantaleo, my husband and best friend

To Leonard Rout, my late father

To Eph and Ruth Rout, my Uncle and Aunt

To all the children I have had the privilege of teaching

ABSTRACT

This study extended the research on response to literature by investigating students' and teachers' conceptions of the characteristics of a 'good' written response to literature, as well as their perceptions of other written response-related issues. Further, the research examined teachers' and children's interactions as they conferenced about literature.

Qualitative research procedures were used to gather data in a combined grade four/five classroom where two teachers were using children's literature as the core content of their reading program. Data triangulation included the researcher's field notes; the transcripts of the teachers' and students' classroom interactions, conferences and interviews; and the children's written responses to literature.

Analyses of the data pertaining to the students' written responses to literature revealed that the six focus children in the study identified three main criteria of a 'good' response: the inclusion of explanations of ideas and opinions; the use of beginnings from a response mind map; and the discussion of plot, setting and characters. The initial entry the children had copied into their response journals outlined the necessity of incorporating these three characteristics in their responses. The teachers' main criterion of a 'good' written response was the inclusion of explanations of ideas and opinions. They also discussed the importance of the journal entries containing starters from the mind map and cohesive content.

Categorization of the students' and teachers' interactions during the independent, recorded and teacher conferences evinced that while conferencing with the children, both teachers asked a substantial number of questions of an efferent nature. Although the teachers' behaviours affected the

interactions of their conferences, data analyses revealed that the children dialogued about similar topics in all three types of conferences. It seemed that the students' interactions were of a more aesthetic nature during the independent and recorded conferences than during the teacher conferences, as the children conversed less about literal aspects of the novels and devoted more of their conversations to extending their understandings of texts and articulating personal engagement responses.

The students' written and oral responses to literature were affected by the teachers' expectations and instruction of literature and literary response.

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CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Study

Introduction

The Dartmouth Conference in 1966 was seminal in affecting the role and use of literature and literary response in education. The majority of participants attending the conference "denounced the position that the study of English, especially literature, should have a rigid scope and sequence from grade to grade" (Cianciolo, 1988, p. 12). Some of the recommendations of the conference were: the need for quality books with diverse visions of life, beliefs, and values; the importance of teachers questioning, discussing and exploring texts with students to broaden their experiential repertoires and promote personal growth; the awareness by teachers of the appropriateness of literature for various readers; the need for educators to be cognizant of recent research and scholarship pertinent to the use of literature; and the need to increase the quantity of books available for children (Cianciolo, 1988). As well, conference participants affirmed the importance of subjective responses to literature, recognizing both the affective and cognitive domains of response. Harding and Britton, both participants at the conference, stated that the affective component was an integral part of a reader's response to literature (1968).

What is the status of both children's literature and student response in classrooms today? The use of children's literature in classrooms seems to be increasing in popularity and a substantial amount of research has examined various aspects of response to literature. However, there seems to be a paucity of research which has examined teachers' and students' perceptions and expectations of the attributes of a 'good' or 'extended' or 'developed' response.

What are the meanings of statements such as "the teacher works to elicit the fullest possible response" (Purves, Rogers & Soter, 1990, p. 71) or "teachers guide students...toward deeper insights into their individual interpretive processes in order that students will develop fuller interpretations" (Harker, 1990, p. 69) or "it is clear that an extended response is also desirable" (Purves, 1992, p. 30)? What are teachers' and students' expectations and understandings of a 'fullest possible response' or an 'extended response' and how do teachers assist students in achieving the latter? Those are the focal areas of this qualitative study examining children's written responses to literature.

Theoretical Framework

The process of reading is viewed as an active construction of meaning during a transaction between a reader and a text (Rosenblatt, 1981). Readers bring "a network of past experiences in literature and life" to the text (Rosenblatt, 1985b, p. 35). The printed symbols guide readers as they construct their literary experiences as the words "stimulate memories from which the reader selects the ideas that he ultimately organizes and sees as corresponding to the text" (Rosenblatt, 1981, p. 5). As Rosenblatt (1985b) states, the reading of literature is "an individual and unique occurrence involving the mind and emotions of some particular reader and a particular text at a particular time under particular circumstances" (p. 36). Thus, the written transactions of readers will be unique as individuals reflect upon their personal evocations of texts.

A substantial amount of research exists on children's oral and written responses to literature. Response journals have been a popular pedagogical tool used by practitioners to capture a view of students' responses to literature

(Cox & Many 1992a; Crowhurst & Kooy, 1985; Fulps & Young, 1991; Hancock, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Kelly, 1990; Marshall, 1987; Petrosky, 1982; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). Researchers have examined the following elements which influence the responses of students: characteristics of readers; contextual factors; and textual factors. As well, the content of student responses has been analyzed using various categorization schemes (e.g. Cox & Many, 1992a; Hancock, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Protherough, 1983b; Purves, 1975; Purves & Rippere, 1968; Squire, 1964; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). Other research has investigated strategies readers employ when composing responses (e.g. Marshall, 1987; and Odell & Cooper, 1976). "But teachers do not want only to extend the types and frequencies of the students' responses, they also want to improve the quality of the response" (McAndrew, 1980, p. 55). Terms and phrases such as "sophisticated response" and "quality of reader's responses" (Beach & Hynds, 1991); "full response" (Bogdan, 1990; Langer, 1990a; Odell & Cooper, 1976); "extended response" and "sustained response" (Purves, 1992); "mature response" (Blunt, 1977); "developed response" (Thomson, 1987) and elaborated response have been used to distinguish qualitative differences amongst students' responses to literature. Some research has endeavoured to investigate characteristics which constitute a 'quality' response (e.g. Blunt, 1977; Bogdan, 1985; Marshall, 1987; Odell & Cooper, 1976; Protherough, 1983b; Squire, 1964; Thomson, 1987).

The Study

The purpose of this study was to extend the research which has explored children's written responses to literature by examining teachers' and students' perceptions of literary response. Both teachers and students were asked to discuss their conceptualizations of written responses to literature and to articulate their opinions of the characteristics of a 'quality' response. As research has revealed that "response to literature is learned" (Probst, 1991, p. 660), the present study examined the interactions of students and teachers in their instructional context - the classroom.

The data for this qualitative research endeavour were gathered by observing interactions in the classrooms, taking extensive field notes, audio-recording interviews with teachers and students, audio-recording teacher and student conferences, and gathering students' written responses to literature. By observing the classroom and taking field notes, the researcher was able to develop an understanding of the mechanics of the teachers' reading program; record teachers' lessons; describe the various types of interactions which occurred in the social unit; and develop insights into the teachers' and students' beliefs and practices regarding literature and literary response. During the interviews with the researcher, the focus children and teachers identified their criteria for a 'good' response and answered questions about other response-related issues. In addition, the teachers discussed various aspects of their reading program with the researcher. The audio-recording of the teachers' and students' conferences provided information about the types of interactions which occurred during the literature discussions. In discussing the written responses to literature, the children and the teachers explored both the favourable and less favourable aspects of the entries. By examining the students' written responses to literature, the researcher was able to compare the content of the entries to the students' and teachers' comments about the responses.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are students' and teachers' conceptualizations of response writing?
2. What are students' and teachers' beliefs of the characteristics which constitute a 'good' response?
3. What are the relationships between teachers' and students' perceptions and expectations of response writing?
4. Are there teaching strategies or methods used to assist children in 'extending' or 'improving' their responses?
5. What are teachers expecting from and teaching by using literature and literary response?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study provide significant information for educators, researchers and theorists who are interested in response to literature. This study may encourage practitioners to examine and reflect upon their theoretical beliefs which shape their practice and drive their instruction of literature and literary response. As well, this project may inspire other teachers to reflect upon their own conceptualizations, expectations and instruction of response writing. The findings of the students' understandings and expectations of response writing may encourage other teachers and researchers to dialogue with children engaged in similar activities to discover their perceptions of this pedagogical practice.

Further, this study provides further insights into understanding the relationship of teacher instruction and response writing, illustrating a triadic relationship between classroom, reader and text. Methodologically, the latter emphasizes the significance and importance of contextualizing research which explores the use of literature and literary response (i.e. conducting research in classrooms).

Boundaries of the Study

The purpose of this study was not to propose that the findings be prescriptive of classroom pedagogy. Rather, the purpose of this research was to generate further understandings of children's written responses to literature, not to judge the practices of the teachers involved in the project. Further, this study was not examining or testing specific reader-response theories but rather these orientations served as a theoretical framework for analyzing the teachers' interactions during the teacher conferences and for determining the overall focus of the students' written responses to literature.

This study was limited to the specific classroom of the two teachers who volunteered for the project. As well, six children were selected as key informants, thus limiting the breadth and depth of the study. Further, because of the time of the data collection, the researcher missed the initial teacher instruction on response writing which occurred in January. Although the latter may have provided additional information for the study, the teachers and students provided extensive information regarding the introduction of response writing.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The literature review is divided into various sections which examine areas of research relevant to the thesis topic. Firstly, various meanings of 'response' to literature are outlined. Secondly, an overview of research exploring the benefits of using children's literature in classrooms is presented. Thirdly, the findings of research examining the use of journals as a medium for recording students' responses are described. A section discussing students' written responses to literature has been divided into two subsections. The first part examines research which has categorized students' responses into various schemes, and the second part outlines research which has explored qualitative aspects of students' written responses. Fourthly, the findings of research investigating the influence of teachers on students' responses are presented. Finally, three general orientations of reader-response theories are discussed.

Response to Literature

Many individuals have explored the notion of having students 'respond' to the literature they read. However, 'response to literature' seems to be a ubiquitous phrase used in various ways by researchers, theorists and practitioners. Too often the phrase is used as an umbrella term "to refer to any aspect of literature and its teaching" (Squire, 1990, p. 13). Squire notes a definite lack

> of concern for the quality of reading and quality of the response. Response to literature does not mean response to just any kind of reading, nor does it mean that 'anything goes' when a child reacts to a particular text. Important as the experiences a child brings to the reading of a book are, the text itself imposes rigorous

> limits on the nature and direction of his or her response. One cannot give a child a predetermined response. But it does not follow that any response, regardless of stimulus, can be accepted in teaching literature (1990, pp. 13-14).

What is response to literature?

> Response to literature is mental, emotional, intellectual, sensory, physical. It encompasses the cognitive, affective, perceptual and psychomotor activities that the reader...performs as he reads or after he has read. Yet most teachers know that, in the classroom, a student's response will be like an iceberg: only a small part will become apparent to the teacher or even to the student himself (Purves & Rippere, 1968, p. xiii).

More recently, Purves described response as the meeting of mind and book (1990, p. 15). To Meek (1990), response "can never be singular; it is always multiple, layered, combining understanding and affect, involving mental images and gestures for which surface features of words always seem inadequate" (p. 10).

Protherough (1983b) outlined some problems associated with discussing response to literature. The unique nature of response prohibits accurate prediction "because all children have their unique blend of experiences, attitudes, backgrounds and interests which they bring to the text" (1983b, p. 6). In addition, membership in a group can modify an individual's response. As well, Protherough stressed, "it is hard to disentangle the pupils' responses from the teacher's" (1983b, p. 5). Further, literary response is a private engagement occurring in a reader's head; the oral or written response is in fact retrospective and selective. Despite the concerns articulated by Protherough, many researchers have examined students' responses to literature.

Children's Literature

In many elementary classrooms, children's literature has become a central component of reading programs. The multiple benefits of using children's literature in classrooms have been well documented (Cullinan, 1989a, 1989b; Fuhler, 1990; Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Huck, 1987). Via literature, children "experience joy in reading and become hooked on books" (Huck, 1987, p. 365). Literature "has the power to influence children's lives" and "[b]esides developing compassion, literature can stretch children's imaginations and help them to see their world in a new way, or entertain the possibilities of new worlds" (Huck, 1987, p. 365). "Literature has the ability to take readers out of their world and into other worlds, to make them laugh or cry, to challenge their beliefs, to make them wonder" (Purves, 1992, p. 20). As well, "good literature not only entertains, it educates" (Huck, 1987, p. 366).

Meek (1988) discussed the private lessons readers learn from literature without formal instruction. She stated that readers become involved with texts, learning to "become both the teller (picking up the author's view and voice) and the told (the recipient of the story, the interpreter)" and that "this symbolic interaction is learned early" (1988, p. 10). Among the many lessons texts teach, Meek wrote, "the most important lesson that children learn is the nature and variety of written discourse, the different ways that language lets a writer tell, and the many different ways a reader reads" (1988, p. 21). Through interactions with literature, children give themselves lessons about "authorship, audience, illustration, and iconic interpretation," and intertextuality (Meek, 1988, p. 10).

Reading programs using literature as their core content, vary in organization and structure (Hiebert & Colt, 1989; Tunnel & Jacobs, 1989;

Zarrillo, 1989). Cullinan (1989a) surveyed 40 state department reading and language arts directors in the United States and discovered an increase in the use of literature-based programs. In reviewing recent research on the effectiveness of literature-based programs, Huggins and Roos (1990) concluded "the literature-based approach produced higher reading achievement and fostered more positive attitudes toward reading" (p. 12) than basal reading methods. As well, the use of literature in classrooms has been shown to develop interest in reading; provide language models for students' own writing; foster critical thinking; develop vocabulary; promote awareness and development of social and cultural understandings; motivate children to read; promote learning; develop literacy; spark readers' imaginations; and develop a sense of story (Fuhler, 1990; Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Huggins & Roos, 1990; Smith & Bowers, 1989).

Literature Response Journals

Journals have been a popular medium used by teachers to capture a view of the 'iceberg' - students' responses to literature. In response journals, students can work through their understandings of text in personally significant ways. Writing "about reading is one of the best ways to get students to unravel their transactions so that we can see how they understand and in the process, help them learn to elaborate, clarify, and illustrate their responses by reference to the associations and prior knowledge that inform them" (Petrosky, 1982, p. 24). Flitterman-King described the special nature of a response journal as "a sourcebook, a repository for wanderings and wonderings, speculations, questionings...a place to explore thoughts, discover reactions, let the mind ramble - in effect, a place to make room for the unexpected" (cited in Hancock, 1992, p. 36).

Journals provide a pedagogical tool for children to use personal language (Halliday, 1978) to express their own individuality. "Strong feelings and opinions are part of personal language" and through personal language "children can relate their own lives to the subject matter being taught [and/or read], establish their own identities, build self-esteem and confidence" (Pinnell, 1985, p. 59). As well, journals promote the use of heuristic language (Halliday, 1978) as children wonder, investigate, acquire knowledge and inquire through their writing. Through informal writing in journals, students can "use their initial reactions, conceptions or autobiographical connections to lead them to discover" (Beach, 1990a, p. 66) insights about the text , themselves, society and/or life in general. Indeed research has demonstrated that autobiographical responses indicating self-involvement with text enhance students' interpretations of that text (Beach, 1990b; Cox & Many, 1992a; Marshall, 1987; Newell, Suszynski & Weingart, 1989; Squire, 1964).

Writing responses to literature in journals has been shown to have other benefits as well. Through journal writing, students engage and participate personally with text; reflect on evoked emotions and ideas; imagine the perspectives and experiences of others; take ownership of their reading as they write about their personal interpretations; connect and associate their prior knowledge and experiences with text; express, reflect upon and clarify their thoughts and understandings; gain self-confidence and motivation as they realize different interpretations of text are acceptable; improve their comprehension, discussion and writing skills; become emotionally involved with literature; develop an appreciation of literature; become cognizant of how meaning is constructed during reading because attention is directed to the thought processes revealed in the journal entries; and express individual interests, needs and concerns as they decide on the content of their entries (Cox & Many, 1992a; Crowhurst & Kooy, 1985; Fulps & Young, 1991; Kelly, 1990; Marshall, 1987; Petrosky, 1982; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). The content of response journals has allowed teachers to see what children understand, their level of understanding, how they are learning, and their growth in communicating ideas (Crowhurst & Kooy, 1985; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). The information provided by these insights has affected teachers' practices regarding response writing.

Research on Response

The use of journals has been only one area examined by research focusing on students' responses to literature. Researchers have also investigated the following elements which influence the responses of students: characteristics of readers; contextual factors; and textual factors (Martinez & Roser, 1991). As well, the contents of student responses have been analyzed into various categorization schemes (Barone, 1990; Cooper & Michalak, 1981; Cox & Many, 1992a; Hancock, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Protherough, 1983a, 1993b; Purves, 1975; Purves & Rippere, 1968; Squire, 1964; Vandergrift, 1990; Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). Although categorization schemes "may fail to capture the complexities of the response process of readers' underlying intentions...[as] an investigator cannot intuit the underlying purpose of a statement" (Beach & Hynds, 1991, p. 454), examining the content of expressed responses has provided insight into the types and/or modes of students' responses.

There seems to be a paucity of research which has explored student use of intellectual strategies when writing literature responses. Langer (1990b), Marshall (1987), Odell and Cooper (1976), and Vipond and Hunt (1984) have investigated the relationships between intellectual strategies or processes readers employ and the content of their responses. However, even though these researchers stated their focus to be on processes or strategies utilized when responding to literature, the strategies identified were very similar to several of the terms used in the categorization schemes. (For example Odell & Cooper (1976) have strategies of comparing and contrasting which indeed could be kinds of responses as well.) However, it could be argued that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate types and strategies. The **what** of responses is a means of examining the **how** of responding; both focus on content.

The strategies could in fact be considered elements of categories of responses. Purves and Rippere (1968) wrote that the elements in their scheme used to describe the kinds of responses were "significantly discrete procedures used by writers" (p. 4). Odell and Cooper (1976), when determining the intellectual strategies used by a writer, acknowledged that some of the processes they described were suggested in Purves's original categorization scheme (p. 208). Beach and Hynds (1991), in their recent review of research on response to literature, included the findings of research on strategies (Langer, 1990a, 1990b; Marshall, 1987; Odell & Cooper, 1976; Vipond & Hunt, 1984) in a table titled "Category Systems Describing Types of Responses" (p. 487). Thus the distinction between kinds of responses (the **what**) and strategies used when writing responses (the **how**) is not clear in the literature.

Some of the research which has categorized the content of students' responses will be discussed below.

Response Category Systems

Purves and Rippere (1968) were interested in examining the content of literature responses. Purves found it necessary to go beyond or further than Squire's "broad categories and to see if [he] could avoid some of the overlap" (p. 3) that he sensed in Squire's (1964) categories of response. Purves and Rippere devised a specific scheme for analyzing the content of written literary responses that would apply to a great variety of responses. The categories they devised, based on the relationship between writer and text, described the responses of individuals from four countries. Each of the four main categories contained specific elements which were not hierarchically arranged from simple to complex. Indeed Purves cautioned that the groupings of the elements were "like any other ordering, arbitrary" (1968, p. 9). The main categories identified were: engagement-involvement (describing/explaining how the work was experienced); perception (looking at the work as separate from reader); interpretation (connecting the work to own world); evaluation (judging the work); and miscellaneous. Purves and Rippere identified 24 subcategories to provide sufficient distinction within the four main categories.

In another study by Purves (1975), he utilized his original categorization scheme when looking at responses of children in grades 3 through 12 to poems and short stories. Via interviews, Purves found that the responses of third-grade children dealt primarily with literal aspects of text and that the children did not elaborate on their evaluations of what they read. Fourth-grade students responded similarly as third grade children except they spent time on "putting themselves in the roles of the characters and comparing themselves with the characters" (p. 465) and elaborating on reasons when evaluating. The responses of fifth-grade students were much fuller and the children spent much of their time talking about personal reactions to and evaluations of the texts. By sixth grade, the students' responses included interpretive statements, particularly in the form of questions about characters. The number of interpretations and evaluations concerned with meaning and understanding increased in frequency in the responses of seventh and eighth-grade students. Responses of 12th-grade students were primarily in terms of interpretation and evaluation related to meaning.

Based on the original work of Purves and Rippere, Odell and Cooper (1976) utilized an elaborated scheme to analyze the content of responses of a grade 11 student. The system employed by Odell and Cooper consisted of four categories with different levels specified for each in order to be able to "capture more information that would be lost by using only the four broad categories" (p. 206). The categorization scheme consisted of: personal statements (about the reader - an autobiographical digression, or about the work - expressing personal engagement with it); descriptive statements (narrational - retelling part of the work or aspects of the work - language, characters, setting, etc.); interpretive statements (whole or parts of work); and evaluative statements (evocativeness or construction or meaningfulness of work).

Using the elaborated system, the researchers found the student consistently "wrote about all three novels in terms of personal engagement with them, descriptions of them and interpetations of them...[and]...in all three responses a recurring movement from statements of engagement with the work to statements of description of parts of the work and interpetations of those parts" was evident (Odell & Cooper, 1976, p. 206).

Cooper and Michalak (1981) used the framework of Purves's four main categories, a Response Preference Measure and essay analysis to examine the most valid way of determining response style of a writer. The Response Preference Measure (RPM) consisted of 20 questions based on Purves's four main response categories. Students were instructed to select five questions on the RPM which they thought were the most important to ask about a story. However, as there was an imbalance of questions/category on the RPM, an individual would be more likely to select questions from the interpretation and perception categories as there were more questions of these types. In statement analysis of responses utilizing the Purves scheme, the researchers learned that "identifying the preferred mode by the statement with the highest percentage of responses gives a misleading view of a single responder's true preference" (p. 166). They concluded that essay analysis, where the researcher looked for the main thrust or thesis or "the one or two elements which characterize[d] the general approach" (Purves & Rippere, 1968, p. 75) of the response was the most valid and accurate measure of looking at an individual's response style. Galda (1983) also discussed how essay analysis (i.e. emphasis of essay) was a superior measure of response style compared to statement analysis or a response preference measure. Thus the findings of studies which utilized the scheme devised by Purves and Rippere may not have accurately depicted the responders' overall orientations (Beach & Hynds, 1991, p. 456).

Zaharias and Mertz (1983) also used the RPM in their study. The major purpose of their investigation was to "verify or identify a valid operational definition of literary response by determining its constituents through the use of a refined Response Preference Measure" (p. 233). They modified the Response Preference Measure by using a Likert-type scale for the 20 items on the measure. After reading each of the six literary works chosen by the researchers, college undergraduates completed the RPM. The researchers found that "response was a multidimensional construct consisting of the following four factors: personal statement, descriptive response, interpretive response, and evaluative response" (p. 239). As well, the students' responses revealed a preference for personal statements and interpretation categories across all works. However, even though the researchers attempted to deal with the problem of unequal distribution of questions across the four main categories, the RPM would still affect the response patterns of students as the items were predetermined. The latter fact contradicts the conceptualization of 'response' to literature.

Cox and Many (1992a) examined students' responses to literature in order to better understand the aesthetic stance of reading and the implications for teaching the latter. The authors investigated the stances of students in grades 4 to 8 when responding to literature and film. They discovered that the majority of children in the study took on an aesthetic stance as they read and responded to literature. Three main characteristics were discovered in the students' responses: imaging and picturing the story in their minds; extending and hypothesizing about the story; and relating feelings and associations to the text. While reading and responding, it was clear that the children were drawing upon their life and literary experiences as they created meaning.

Hancock (1992) was also interested in examining the responses of students. Hancock analyzed the responses of a sixth-grade student who was directed to record her thoughts and feelings as she transacted with novels she had been encouraged to read. The patterns of responses of the student were classified into five categories: character interaction (advice and criticism were offered to the characters in the text); character empathy (emotional feelings were expressed); prediction and validation of events in the text; personal experiences that were related to the experiences and events in the books; and philosophical reflections (values and personal beliefs were shared).

In a subsequent article, Hancock (1993a) categorized the written responses of sixth-grade students into three broad areas of "personal meaning-making, character and plot involvement, and literary criticism" (p. 468). She identifed various response options within the first two categories. The four personal meaning-making options included: monitoring understanding; making inferences; making, validating or invalidating predictions; and expressing wonder or confusion. Character interaction, character assessment and story involvement were response patterns in the character and plot involvement category. In another recent article, Hancock (1993b) utilized a somewhat different categorization scheme to classify the written responses of the grade 6 students in her study (i.e. different terms were used to label the categories and subcategories of her classification scheme).

Barone (1990) examined the journal entries of her students (grades 1-3) and noted the emerging patterns. The children's written responses to literature reflected categories of "retelling, personal subjective response or questions related to the understanding of the text" (p. 49).

Another research project involving the use of literature responses was conducted by Wollman-Bonilla (1989) in her fourth-grade classroom. The students were divided into groups which met regularly to discuss the novels they read, to choose other novels to read, and to share their written assignments. The author decided to implement letter writing (instead of assigned writing tasks) as a component to her program in order to give the students freedom to reflect upon the novels they were reading. Wollman-Bonilla organized the content of the students' letters into five categories: opinions about the story events and characters; personal involvement; discussion of the author's techniques, reflections on the reading process and predictions; and questions about the text (vocabulary, events).

Although the categorization schemes outlined in this review differed, commonalities were apparent regarding the kinds of content identified in responses: personal engagement; description; discussion of the text at both distanced and personal levels; interpretation; and evaluation.

"But teachers do not want only to extend the types and frequencies of the students' responses, they also want to improve the quality of the response" (McAndrew, 1980, p. 55). Terms and phrases such as "sophisticated response" and "quality of reader's responses" (Beach & Hynds, 1991); "full response" (Bogdan, 1990; Langer, 1990a; Odell & Cooper, 1976); "extended response" and "sustained response" (Purves, 1992); "mature response" (Blunt, 1977); "developed response" (Thomson, 1987); and elaborated response have been used to distinguish qualitative differences amongst students' responses to literature. Some research has endeavoured to investigate characteristics which constitute a 'quality' response.

Models of Response Levels

Jean Blunt (1977) used the work of Harding (1977) and Early (1960) to identify some of "the salient features of the reading process [that] might help in an analysis of responses" (Blunt, 1977, p. 37) in order to determine the components of a 'full' response. Blunt took six elemental activities from Harding's work which she regarded "as constituting a full response to fiction" (Thomson, 1987, p. 151) and organized these elements hierarchically into two stages of increasing complexity. Stage one included: attends willingly (the reader's attitude must be oriented towards the pleasure reading a novel can offer); elementary perception and comprehension; and empathizing (need of distancing or detachment to evaluate work as a whole). Stage two included: analogizing and searching for self-identity (using analogies from the reading to better understand about self or life in general); distanced evaluation of the participants (commenting about the actions or sufferings of characters); and reviewing the whole work as the author's creation. Blunt wrote "the ultimate requirement of a mature response is the ability to recognize that an author presents an evaluation of possible human experience in his own written style. The book is finally seen as an artifact, a convention to be rejected or applauded by the reader" (1977, p. 42).

In Blunt's study, 16 fifteen-year-old students from various social and educational backgrounds filled out questionnaires about their reading habits. As well, the students were interviewed about their processes of reading. When Blunt analyzed their responses she discovered the following: I.Q. of students did not guarantee a full response; imaginative and inventive students had an advantage when responding to fiction; females demonstrated a high degree of empathizing; and individuals who read more were closer to achieving a fuller response. Blunt suggested that if the reactions of the individuals in her study were typical, then teachers needed to recognize that "the level of response reached is not always inextricably linked to ability" (p. 46) and responding is a very individual and personal activity. She stated "the full response to reading is highly charged with personal, affective concerns" (p. 47). Concurring with the latter, Monson (1986) contended "the emotional response is probably the most important base upon which to build other responses" (p. 553) and judged the emotional response to be the most important for elementary children (p. 556).

Thomson (1987) used the work of Blunt, Harding and Iser (1980) to hypothesize a developmental model of response. He cautioned that he was not "trying to make literary response into a measurable and marketable quantity" (p. 149) nor did he view development of response as simple and linear. Thomson had students in two schools between the ages of 13 and 16 complete a questionnaire in 1978 and 1984 which provided information on the students' reading practices, habits, and selections. In 1978, 51 students were interviewed about their reading processes and/or strategies (i.e. how they read). The interview questions were based on Blunt's organization of levels of responses. From the findings of his research, Thomson formulated a developmental model of response to literature in which he linked stages to strategies, and ordered them hierarchically from simple to complex, through varying degrees of interest and sophistication of response. Thomson (1987) stated that the process stages and strategies of reading were progressive and cumulative (i.e. "as a reader progresses from one level to the next, she or he...develops those [old] strategies for increasingly complex purposes, as well as adopting new strategies" p. 178).

Thomson's six stages of response to literature were: "unreflective interest in action; empathising; analogising; reflecting on the significance of events (theme) and behaviour (distanced evaluation of characters); reviewing the whole work as the author's creation"; and consciously considering the "relationship with the author, recognizing textual ideology, and understanding of self (identity theme) and of one's own reading processes" (1987, pp. 360-361). Level six was the "highest" or most mature level of response. Thomson identified particular reading stages at each developmental stage.

Thomson believed a "mature reader's process of response...combine[d] emotional involvement and cool detachment" (1987, p. 150). He stated that Harding and Blunt "seem to agree that the development of a mature response to literature involves a progressive movement from close emotional involvement to more distanced reflective detachment, and from an interest in self to an interest in other people and the human condition" (p. 153). Thomson articulated that it "is a matter of the utmost importance that students be able to examine themselves and their world with some detachment, to step outside themselves and look at their experiences and feelings, as well as those of others, from another perspective beyond the immediately subjective one" (p. 83).

Robert Protherough (1983a, 1983b) also attempted to describe the development of students' responses to literature in terms of "increased understanding and sensitivity" (1983b, p. 44). The observations of British children's (11 to 16) oral and written responses, the children's evaluations of literature, and the students' views of the processes of reading fiction, provided the data from which Protherough devised questions which he hoped would discriminate between different levels and modes of responses. He stressed the final product was a tentative model, "a structured set of generalizations about many individual responses" (1983b, p. 45).

There were five hierarchical levels within each of the four categories of response: theme (awareness of how the narrative works); empathy (the ability to read people and their situation); motivation, "the ability to understand why people in certain situations act as they do" (1983b, p. 49); and prediction, "the ability to comprehend likely outcomes beyond the story in terms of the text" (1983b, p. 51). Protherough discovered a high degree of consistency in classifying students' responses using his model as individuals responded at similar levels across the four categories. The levels within each category represented a movement toward an interpretation of the total meaning of the text where both personal and textual input were utilized in the response.

Bogdan proposed different levels of response with varying degrees - "total and partial - of engagement with or detachment from a literary work" (Gambell, 1986, p. 122). The levels of response were: precritical (initial emotional responses); critical (analytical responses based on intellectual inquiry and the adoption of a stance of detachment); and postcritical (responses based on both feeling and understanding). Bogdan (1985) asserted that at the postcritical level, students would "assimilate their accumulated emotional reactions, literary understanding, and critical know-how from the previous stages within a much wider range of language forms and tasks" (p. 48). Bogdan contended that a full literary response would only occur if students went beyond the precritical response; the "precritical state...is the crucial first step in literary knowing" (1990, p. 130). She contended readers build on emotional material evoked at the precritical level "in such a way that response can be deepened, refined, and enriched by standing back from the text" (1990, p. 129).

Similar to Bogdan's model, Vandergrift's (1990) scheme to classify students' responses (both oral and written) reflected a movement from a precritical to a postcritical understanding of the meaning-making process. The scheme was hierarchical as the response types moved from subjective responses (personal),

> to a more objective position (descriptive, classificatory and analytic) in an attempt to identify the characteristics of the work that triggered personal responses...to a combination of subjective and objective responses (interpretive and evaluative) to use both personal and external criteria in interpreting and judging a text (p. 127).

Vandergrift stated that as readers develop a critical understanding of text they begin to more objectively analyze both the text and their own subjective and personal responses to it. In examining ninth- and 10th-grade students' oral and written responses to a short story, Vandergrift found "students' responses...began with expressions of personal feelings...[moved to discussing] those feelings in a more objective manner, relating them to events in the text...[and finally combined] objective and subjective responses in interpreting and evaluating the story" (p. 137).

Cianciolo (1988) also discussed criticial thinking in children's response to literature. She suggested some research indicated three developmental levels in "transactional response to literature as an art" (p. 30). At the first level, readers do not "distinguish self from others...[and] they are aware of what appears to them and not what appears to others" (p. 30). Characteristics of individuals at the second level, included the abilities to take others' points of view and be cognizant of their own subjectivity of their interpretations. Cianciolo identified the third level as autonomous as "readers make judgments more in light of good reasons and less in terms of socially current opinions" (p. 31) and use reason to critically examine the values of themselves and of society. She stated "this approach to the study of one's response to literature tends to focus on the cognitive, but it honors the necessity for the subjective and affective aspects of response" (p. 32). Cianciolo, like other researchers mentioned previously, articulated the importance of both the cognitive and affective elements in response. She noted, "Our cognition and our emotions are intrinsically related in aesthetic responses. The ways we understand a story...influence our feelings and our feelings guide our understanding of it" (p. 30).

Nelms and Zancanella (1990) also developed a model of reading and responding which acknowledged reflection or detachment growing from personal involvement with text. They described a process consisting of four recursive stages of responding "moving from inner to outer" (p. 40). They stated responding begins with "evocation of the text" (p. 40) where readers can lose themselves in a book. The next stage involved dialogue between readers and texts. Readers may retell, paraphrase, guess, question, "provide personal associations and parallel instances" (p. 41), select and/or repress details of memories, or decode cultural codes, without interpreting the text. At stage three, interpretation, the significance of text was considered and inferences were derived from text and from ideas/thoughts imposed upon the work from the 'outside'. The fourth stage of criticism entailed a reader considering "the values of the text, its adequacy in representing the perspectives of a particular community of readers...[and the] ways in which the text itself provides a critique of one's society" (p. 40). As well, "assumptions embedded in the text are examined in relation to reader's constructs of the world outside text" (pp. 40-41).

Hancock (1993a) was also interested in extending students' responses to literature. She articulated that the ultimate goal of response writing was to "inspire deeper thought on the part of the student" (p. 471). She believed enriching and extending students' written responses was accomplished through students engaging in a variety of response options (e.g. monitoring understanding; making inference; making, validating or invalidating predictions; expressing wonder or confusion; character interaction; character assessment; story involvement; and literary criticism, pp. 468-470).

Reader Stances and Responses

Langer (1990b) explored qualitative differences in responses. She wanted to examine how middle and high school students created their understandings or meanings as they read for literary and informative purposes. Langer identified four stances taken in relation to a text: readers used their own background knowledge and information from the text to begin to build an understanding of the material; readers used both their prior and textual knowledge, taking new information and going beyond what they understood by asking questions; readers used knowledge of the text to reflect on their own background knowledge; and readers distanced themselves "...from the world, reflecting on and reacting to both the content and the experience" (1990a, p. 813) by objectifying the text, judging it and then relating it to other texts and/or experiences. Langer articulated that since these four stances were linked to the process of "coming to understand", these stance distinctions allowed analyzing "envisionments in order to reach a fuller response" (p. 253). As well, she contended it may be possible to use these stances to examine reasons underlying students' successes or difficulties in extending their responses.

The purposes of Many's (1992) study were to investigate the effect of grade level on the stances of children when responding to literature and to examine "the qualitative differences found in responses written from different stances and determine if any differences" (p. 170) were related to grade level. Students' free responses to stories were categorized according to stance - primarily efferent, no primary focus (both efferent and aesthetic) and primarily aesthetic. In her conclusions, Many stated that students at various grade levels did not differ significantly in their stances when responding to texts but there were differences "between grade levels in terms of the content and complexity of the responses" (p. 181). For example, fourth-grade children wrote "brief, superficial statements judging the characters" whereas the responses of the older children contained elaborated judgments "with students giving their opinions concerning specific story elements" (p. 179). She suggested these "differences in sophistication which can exist within response from the same stance", give a "clearer indication of what might be expected" from students at these grade levels and "provide educators with a sense of direction as they endeavour to implement approaches which develop students' ability to analyze literary works" (p. 181) by focusing on the aesthetic evocation. Further, Many contended teachers could encourage the development of mature and sophisticated responses by encouraging students to "continually connect the emotions, associations, thoughts and visualizations evoked back to the story world" (p. 182).

Qualitative Scoring Schemes for Responses

Marshall (1987) investigated the effect of the form of writing task on the nature of responses written to literature. Grade 11 students read four stories and completed four different writing tasks. At the completion of each story, they engaged in one of the following writing tasks: no writing; restricted writing (answer eight short answer questions); personal analytic writing (draw on personal background knowledge and values in elaborating on responses to the text); and formal analytic writing (use evidence solely from the text to interpret the work). Every student completed each of the four writing tasks. Two posttests were administered and scored for quality of content using an eight-point scaled system. For both posttests (answering questions and writing an essay on each story i.e. free response), students who had initially written extensively about a story in either a personal or formal analytical mode, scored better than those who completed the restricted writing task. Students' responses received lower scores when "they remained within a summary framework, using few textual specifics and making low level inferences...[and] scored higher when they moved beyond a retelling of the story to an analysis of its features, supporting their inferences with specific details from the texts" (p. 46).

Newell, Suszynski and Weingart (1989) used Marshall's (1987) evaluation scheme to examine responses written about literature. The underlying assumption of their study was that personal writing would contribute to a deeper understanding of text as "personal writing invites students to draw upon their knowledge and experience to interpret the text and to organize their responses" (Newell et al., 1989, p. 39). After reading a story, 10th-grade students completed two analytical writing tasks requiring them to interpret and to explain aspects of the text. For the reader-based writing task, the students used their own experiences and elements of the text to elaborate upon their personal interpretations of the story. The text-based formal writing task required students to draw on references solely from the text in order to interpret it.

The researchers examined the effects of the writing tasks on the overall quality of students' responses using Marshall's eight-point scoring guide. As in Marshall's study (1987), students who wrote in the personal mode "produced essays judged to be significantly higher in quality in terms of level of interpretation...[as students] consider[ed] the meaning and significance of story elements, resulting in some elaboration of their point of view" (Beach, 1990a, p. 68). Consistent with other research, higher quality responses included personal involvement and reflective detachment.

Other Research on Response Levels

The research discussed to this point has "suggest[ed] that a reader's emotional responses are essential to understanding a text" (Beach, 1990a, p. 69). In Squire's (1964) study of ninth- and 10th-grade students' responses to four short stories, he found that, indeed, personal engagement with a text was related to interpretation (as did Marshall, 1987; Newell et al., 1989). Although Squire's data indicated "readers respond[ed] to literature in unique and selective ways and that the nature of the individual's reactions" (p. 51) was a result of the interaction of a variety of factors, there was a stong positive relationship between the number of responses coded as literary judgment and the number indicating self-involvement. Squire hypothesized that it seemed

> readers who become strongly involved emotionally in a story tend, either while reading or more frequently

> at the end of reading a selection, to analyze the elements in a story which give rise to their involvement...They thus tend to be superior readers in that they open themselves to a maximum of facets, accommodate imaginatively the widest possible number of avenues to the literary experience (pp. 22-23).

Beach (1990b) also found students' interpretations of stories were enhanced when they elaborated on their personal experiences (p. 233). He analyzed the journal responses of 49 university students in two literature courses. Beach discovered that students who "moved recursively back and forth between the text and their experience, using one to reflect on the other" (p. 222) and students who adopted a reflective orientation, defined the significance of their own experience and the text. Beach maintained that autobiographical responses enhanced interpretations of texts, as students who explored their own related experiences gained insights into their reading.

Odell and Cooper (1976) were also interested in understanding qualitative differences in responses. They suggested students could be assisted to respond more fully if teachers determined the processes students were or were not using when formulating responses and "what processes students [we]re already using but need[ed] to employ more thoroughly, more imaginatively, more carefully" (p. 204). As well, they hypothesized that taken together, information on the intellectual strategies utilized (i.e. focus, contrast, classification, change, time sequence, logical sequence and physical context) and the kind of response written, suggested "an operational definition of responding 'fully'" (p. 221). Further, the researchers stated that readers cannot respond fully if they habitually make only one type of response or if they base these responses on only one intellectual strategy (pp. 221-222).

Graves (1989) also addressed the development of students' responses to texts. He examined the weekly letters students wrote to their teachers and peers about the books they were reading. Analyses of the responses with adults revealed a hierarchy of engagement: "...responds to questions; ...initiates questions - literature; ...initiates questions - personal; and...makes statements or pronouncements" (p. 780). As the students' understandings of the characters increased, a hierarchy of involvement was evident as well: retelling the story; retelling events involving the characters; focusing on the motives of the characters; criticizing the plausibility of the story events that were a result of the nature of the characters; and finally linking the characters to other books and themselves. The children's developmental pattern of awareness of authors showed the following progression: using the name of the author; assigning an important characteristic to the author; writing about or referring to other books written by the author; relating the author to other authors; discussing the author's approach; and criticizing the approach of the author.

Finally, in addressing the notion of assessment of response (and hence qualitative differences) Galda (1982) stated that flexibility might be a criterion to measure response. "Could we say that a 'good' response...is a flexible one which encompasses the interaction of textual demands and a reader's experience...abilities, and predilections? A 'good' response would then vary across texts and readers" (p. 119). She contended another criterion against which to assess responses "might be the amount of support or documentation provided by the student...Does the responder freely express his or her views but also return to the text for documentation?" (pp. 119-120).

The research and literature which has addressed the quality of students' responses to literary works seems to suggest that a 'full' response includes personal engagement and reflective detachment. The reader returns to the text and/or explores her background knowledge in order to examine the responses experienced both during and after the reading event. Rosenblatt (1990) contended a work has to be evoked before it can become the object of reflection and analysis. She also stated that personal response should be "the basis for growth toward more and more balanced, self-critical, knowledgeable interpretation" (1990, p. 100). Purves (1968) also wrote of the importance of engagement in responding to literature and of a balance between engagement and interpretation or analyses (p. 63). Monson (1986) asserted "much of what seems essentially interpretation of a story has with it a solid element of personal involvement" (p. 554).

Teacher Influence

Research has indicated that "what students know about literature, what books they read, and how they respond to literature are heavily influenced by their literary experiences in elementary school" (Walmsley, 1992, p. 508). Studies "have fairly uniformly found that methods and approaches in teaching do influence the content of students' responses" (Applebee, 1977, p. 257). Hynds wrote that "[i]n demonstrating competence to their teachers, readers develop the pragmatic skills to fit their responses into their perceptions of the teachers' expectations for what constitutes a 'good' reading or response. Part of this involves learning how to master a particular teacher's preferred discourse form for demonstrating competence" (1990, p. 250).

Tchudi noted children "learn a range of thoughts and feelings that the adult attaches to the literary experience. They learn what the adult attends to, and as in life, they are being modeled a way or ways of responding to literature" (1985, p. 464). "By what they say, by what they do, by what they demand and expect of children, [teachers] demonstrate what they value and what they want children to value" (Tchudi, 1985, p. 468). In a recent review on response to literature, Martinez and Roser asserted that "research suggests the powerful effect of the teachers' modeling of response to literature on the subsequent responses of young children" (1991, p. 652).

The International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (IEA) conducted an international survey regarding literature instruction of students aged 14 and 18. The IEA study's "primary focus was on the influence of schools and teachers and the achievement of students and the cross-national data were intended to enable decision makers and researchers to see if any practices in another system might be efficacious and transferable to another school setting" (Purves, 1973, p. 220). The study indicated that response to literature was learned, as response was affected by culture, school (which is an aspect of culture) and teaching practices.

Hickman (1983, 1984) looked at elementary students' (grades K-5) responses to literature and the importance of the role of the teacher. She discovered "teachers wielded a great deal of power over children's response to literature...and in suggesting and demonstrating appropriate modes of responding, teachers influenced both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the responses expressed by the children" (1983, p. 12). Hickman's observations of the classroom community pointed to the teacher as the "single most influential member" (1984, p. 282). In Hickman's research, the "teacher's own response behaviour was mirrored again and again in children's comments, questions, and approaches. Everything considered, the role of the teacher proved to be a powerful determiner in children's expressions of response to literature" (1983, p.13).

Michalak (1977) also examined teachers' influence on students' responses. She determined secondary English teachers' preferred modes of response, styles of teaching literature, and the relation of those two factors to students' responses. Michalak found students' preferred modes of responding were affected by teachers' styles of instruction and that students adopted the teachers' styles.

The relationship between instruction and the nature of grade 5 students' oral and written responses to literature was investigated by McMahon (1992). She found that when "instruction focused on broad personal issues of reader response, discussions and written response were more broad-based and personal. When instruction focused on comprehension strategies...students were more likely to identify the 'correct' message in the text" (Raphael, McMahon, Goatley, Bentley, Boyd, Pardo & Woodman, 1992, p. 59). Similarly, Dekker (1991) found both the quality and variety of students' written responses increased when teachers modeled and encouraged various kinds of responses to literature.

Many and Wiseman (1992a) found diverse teaching approaches to literature significantly affected the content of responses of grade 3 students. Children who received instruction which focussed on their literary experiences, on their reactions and thoughts to the stories, wrote responses "indicating more involvement in the story world, described similarities between characters and real people, and treated literature more as an aesthetic experience than a lesson or an object to be studied" (p. 265). Efferent responses, which focussed on literary analysis, were most frequently written by children who received instruction on identifying and critiquing "literary elements through the analysis of character development, problems and solutions, and themes as developed in both text and illustrations" (p. 269).

Further, research has also shown instruction "designed to encourage the lived-through experience of reading influences the content and quality of children's responses to literature" to the extent that elementary students' responses "can reach the higher levels of abstract and critical thinking that are usually associated with the responses of older middle and high school students" (McGee, 1992, p. 532).

Teacher questioning techniques have been shown to influence students' written responses. Hynds noted "students produce[d] more sophisticated responses...when teachers' questioning styles [we]re 'open' rather than 'closed'" (1992, p. 82). Marshall's observations of a grade 11 class showed teacher questioning techniques and modelling guided the students to "a conventional interpretation" of the literature (1987, p. 36). On writing assignments, the students were asked to interpret specific textual aspects or issues which required "text-based formal analysis" (Marshall, 1987, p. 37) and seldom were asked to focus on their personally lived through experiences in their reading. In interviews, the students indicated they were regurgitating the teacher's ideas on the assignments. The "students' responses to literature were both supported and constrained by the discourse conventions of the classroom" (Marshall, 1987, p. 39). It seemed the students were learning a particular approach to literature as a result of classroom instructional techniques.

The notion of classrooms as 'interpretive communities' (Fish, 1980) also reflects the influential role of the teacher.

> When a group of people dialogue with one another and read each others' texts, shared meanings develop among them and they become part of an interpretive community. These meanings that they share affect their subsequent interactions and, over time, lead to the development of a thought style, a common approach to viewing the world (Hanssen, Harste, & Short, 1990, pp. 264-265).

What is talked about within an interpretive community affects how the members think and how they think affects what they talk and write about. "Because each classroom is a community, the members of that community may assume positions that enable them to promote rich and diverse responses to literature. The teacher seems to be a key member of the classroom response community, and in talking about books with children, the teacher may have the opportunity to promote children's growth as responders" (Martinez & Roser, 1991, p. 648). Hynds (1992) noted how "students learn to fit their responses within the accepted conventions of a particular classroom interpretive community" as students develop "pragmatic skills to...[discover] the hidden rules of 'acceptable' interpretation in their particular classroom" (p. 90).

Beach (1990a), commenting on research conducted by Hunt and Vipond (1987), suggested that "response is a social, cultural activity" (p.73). Beach also stated that "to participate in these communities readers learn the particular ways of responses, attitudes, interests and roles unique to their communities" and that a "classroom itself ultimately becomes a community of responders whose agenda is shaped by the teacher" (1990a, p. 73). Purves also noted the effects of teachers on students' responses as he maintained there "are few 'untrained' responses, if any" (1985, p. 65). Further, Probst indicated the shaping effects of instruction and classroom communities on response by stating "response to literature is learned" (1991, p. 660).

Teachers want students "to develop their responses and their capacity to respond, and they develop these things by examining themselves, their world and the novel. The teacher's function is to strengthen this examination and to make it exciting and stimulating" (Purves & Rippere, 1968, p. 63). Beach (1990a) wrote

> cumulative research on response to literature suggests that teachers can enhance the quality of classroom responses by the following: employing informal oral or writing that encourages a tentative, exploratory stance; eliciting engagement responses; helping students relate prior texts to current texts; relating students' attitudes to their reading; recognizing students' 'story-driven' orientation (reader reads primarily for the enjoyment of text); and encouraging sharing of responses to build a sense of community (pp. 74-75).

Theoretical Orientations

The previous section demonstrated the salient influence of teachers on students' response writing. Teachers' theoretical beliefs about the nature of the reading process and the relationship between text and reader will affect their teaching of and use of literature and literary response in classrooms (Rosenblatt, 1991a). Teacher adoption of particular facets of the reading-response theories outlined below may influence: the purposes, goals and expectations of using literature and response writing in classrooms; the selection processes of literature by both teachers and students; the instructional techniques and practices of teachers; the criteria used in determining validity of interpretations of text; the role of discussion of literature in classrooms; and the types of classroom interactions.

The following portion of this chapter will describe some literary theories teachers may adopt or draw from or use as frameworks.

Reader-response Theories

The term reader-response has "come to be associated with the work of critics who use the words reader, the reading process, and response to mark out an area for investigation" (Tompkins, 1980, p. ix). Reader-response theories arose in direct opposition to the New Critics who viewed the text as an autonomous entity (Rosenblatt, 1991a; Schulz, 1991) "embodying its meaning and existing in its own right as a unified system whose workings could be objectively studied and analyzed" (Rosenblatt, 1991a, p. 58). In contrast, reader-response theorists argue that a text cannot "be understood apart from its results. Its 'effects', psychological and otherwise, are essential to any accurate description of its meaning, since that meaning has no effective existence outside of its realization in the mind of the reader" (Tompkins, 1980, p. ix). It is the response of the reader "that constitutes meaning" (Harker, 1990, p. 69). Although reader-response theorists differ in their primary emphasis on text or reader, all believe readers actively construct meaning as they interact or transact with texts. As well, most reader-response theorists "offer some sort of explanation for how similar meanings can recur from one reader to the next" (Hynds, 1990, p. 242).

Rosenblatt differentiated amongst various reader-response theories by characterizing them "in terms of the emphases in their treatment of the reader-text relationship" (1991a, p. 59): reader-oriented theories (subjective criticism and psychoanalytical theory); text-oriented theories (structuralism); and reader-plus-text-oriented theories (reception theory, transactional theory and interpretive communities).

Reader-oriented Theories

Subjective Criticism

David Bleich viewed reading as a subjective process in that a reader's personality determined what was perceived. Bleich contended "feelings precede deliberate thought" (Schulz, 1991, p. 17). Our thoughts about a perceptual experience entail both our reactions to the emotional response stimulated by the perception and the experience itself. Bleich believed that as we read, "we transform the text into symbols as our emotions and intellect direct us, and we interpret the symbols we have created. Thus the study of literature must begin with response. The literary work exists in the mind of the reader" (Probst, 1988, p. 238). According to Bleich, who embraced a subjective paradigm, the text, being an object, cannot initiate action and therefore does not direct or restrain the reader. Consequently, readers direct their own activities while reading.

Bleich claimed "the study of response and interpretation and the experience of them are part of the same activity" (1980, p. 149). He believed a reader's "subjective re-creation of the literary work" (Graham, 1984, p. 56) could be explored by examining three components of the response to literature: "what the reader perceives in the text; the affective component related to that perception; and the analogies associated with what was perceived" (Schulz, 1991, p. 17). After exploring their own responses at the perceptive, affective and associative levels, readers were then ready to communicate their recreations of the work to other readers. To Bleich, response acquired meaning only in the context of "a predecided community...interest in knowledge" (1980, p. 158); when it was "publicly explained and validated" (Tompkins, 1978, p. 1071). Through negotiation in an interpretive community, readers communicated their own

> personal recreation of the work to other readers. [They] can see what is shared and what is not. Knowledge is thus the result of sharing responses. Readers declare their responses to the work and then...discuss those individual recreations, seeking similarities and differences, and construct a consensus which - for them, at that time, in those circumstances - is knowledge. Knowledge, in Bleich's critical theory, is what is declared to be so by the community (Probst, 1988, p. 239).

Bleich maintained individuals freely and consciously choose to be members of an interpretive community. The "group is formed by individuals who then negotiate its assumptions into existence. The individual is the source of communal systems of interpretation" (Tompkins, 1978, p. 1073). The formulated aims of the communal group will affect the direction of discussion and determine the validity of interpretations of the literature.

Psychoanalytical Theory

Holland's reader-response theory also has psychoanalytical roots as he explained how personality affected literary response. For Holland, "each reader creates a unity for the text of his own identity theme" (Mailloux, 1977, p. 418). He stated an individual's 'identity theme' could be discerned by abstracting from her choices in life "various subordinate patterns and themes until...[a] central, unifying pattern in that life which is the invariant sameness, the 'identity theme'" is identified (1980, p. 121). The literent, " the one who responds to - re-creates - literature", comes to the text with "a set of characteristic expectations, typically a balance of related desires and fears" (Holland, 1976b, pp. 336 & 338). Holland believed that a reader interacted with the work, becoming part of it and in the transaction, a meaningful unity was created in the mind of the reader.

To Holland the overarching principle which governed the relationship between a reader's identity theme (personality, character) and "the creation and re-creation of literary and other experiences...[wa]s: identity re-creates itself...personal style re-creates itself. That is all of us, as we read, use the literary work to symbolize and finally to replicate ourselves" (Holland, 1980, p. 124). He asserted that as individuals read, they use adaptive strategies to gratify expectations and defensive mechanisms built up from the literary work to ward off anxiety. Holland contended that a reader shaped a literary work "to give him what he characteristically both wishes and fears, and he also constructs his characteristic way of achieving what he wishes and defeating what he fears" (1980, p. 124). As readers take in a literary work, they project characteristic fantasies into it (which are aspects of identity) and "transform these fantasies into themes - meanings - of characteristic concern" (Holland, 1976b, p. 338). Holland believed there could be many readings for a text as "perception is a constructive act; [and] interpretation is a function of identity" (1976c, p. 341). He stated, as with all interpretation, "the unity we find in literary texts is impregnated with the identity that finds that unity" (1980, p. 123).

Text-oriented Theories

Structuralism

Structuralists "see literature as a particular organization of language and focus on the way its meanings are produced rather than on the meanings themselves" (Thomson, 1987, p. 101). Literature is studied and analyzed in a systematic and objective manner in order to discover how the system of signs (i.e. the text) construct meaning. Structuralists want "to find and make explicit the 'grammar' of a literary text, the understanding ideal readers have of how to read literature according to socially determined notions of appropriateness" (Thomson, 1987, p. 101). Consistent with the New Critics, structuralists ignore the significance of extratextual elements (e.g. historical background of an author; readers' values, life experiences and emotions) in the reading process and place importance on the internal relationships in textual analysis. However, structuralists differ from New Criticism as they view texts having meaning as a result of readers actively applying socially acceptable internalized literary conventions; not because the text itself contains meaning.

Culler (1980) contended literary works had structure and meaning because they were read "in a particular way, because these potential properties, latent in the object itself, are actualized by the theory of discourse applied in the act of reading" (p. 102). Culler labeled the understanding that good readers have which enable them to make literature texts have meaning as 'literary competences' (Thomson, 1987, p. 101). He described literary competences as "an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one what to look for....an internalized grammar of literature" which allows readers "to convert linguistic sequences into literary structures and meanings" (1980, p.102). Culler maintained that this implicit knowledge of publicly accepted conventions was possessed by both readers and authors. Application of this internalized grammar determined construction of meaning and thus interpretation of text would be limited by a reader's literary competence as the structure of text was a creation of the reader (Mailloux, 1977).

Barthes discussed the underlying codes which operate in texts (i.e. the codes of action, puzzles, character discernment and societies and culture). He believed readers learn these codes through both living in society and reading literature. "These codes, shared by both author and reader, create a network through which a text passes to become a literary work...[and] readers construct a work of literature out of text by filtering the text through the network of codes they have internalized. The codes are the source of the text's meanings and involve the reader in producing those meanings" (Thomson, 1987, p.107). Barthes stated that multiple meanings were generated when readers examined texts for evidence of the codes (revealed in words, phrases and sentences) after their initial readings. His approach "to textual analysis require[d] that readers manipulate the text and open it up to the plurality of its meaning" (Schulz, 1991, p. 20). To Barthes, the goal of reading was to "unravel the multiple codes that make meaning possible, thereby freeing as many varied meanings as the text might suggest" (Schulz, 1991, p. 18).

Reader-plus-text-oriented Theories

Reception Theory

Wolfgang Iser purported the existence of an interactive and interdependent relationship between reader and text as he believed a reader actively participated in the production of meaning. Iser contended that reading was guided by "the text and the personal experience and cultural history of the reader, his or her present representation of the world and the reading conventions s/he has internalized" (Thomson, 1984, p. 18). The literary work was brought into existence by the convergence of reader and text.

Iser stated reading "was always the process of anticipation and retrospection" (1980, p. 50) as subsequent words, phrases, and sentences acted upon one another to connect in different ways to form meaning. The text was transformed into an experience for the reader through a continual process of modification of meaning. A reader's wandering viewpoint traveling inside the text involved the reader in the "processes of synthesizing an assembly of constantly shifting viewpoints, of continually forming and modifying both expectations of what is to come and interpretations of what has previously been read" (Thomson, 1984, p. 21). Iser stated that omissions or gaps or blanks in texts provided invitations for readers to establish their own connections by bringing in past life and literary experiences. As the gaps in text may be filled in various ways, "one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities...in this very act the dynamics of reading are revealed. By making his decision he implicitly acknowledges the inexhaustibility of the text" (Iser, 1980, p. 55). The indeterminacies found in text engage readers in the construction of meaning while simultaneously imposing or limiting interpretations.

Transactional Theory

Rosenblatt adopted Dewey's term, 'transaction', to describe the reciprocal relationship between reader and text. "Transaction...designates an ongoing process in which the elements or parts are seen as aspects or phases of a total situation" (Rosenblatt, 1985a, p. 98). In reading, both reader and text act upon each other, each mutually contributing to and defining the relationship. She believed the reader brings a reservoir of life and literary experiences to the text, a set of signs. Rosenblatt stated the marks or squiggles on the page guide or stimulate elements/memories in a reader's reservoir from which he selectively chooses "and organizes and sees corresponding to the text" (1981, p. 5). "The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text" (Rosenblatt, 1976, p. 25). Rosenblatt asserted that during the transaction between text and reader, a new experience, the 'poem', was evoked (i.e. "the lived-through experience of building up the work under guidance of the text" 1976, p. 69). The poem, an event in the life history of a reader, occurred at a "particular time in a particular environment at a particular moment " (Rosenblatt, 1976, p. 20). "This lived-through 'work', this 'evocation', is what the reader 'responds to' as it is being called forth during the transaction, and as it is reflected on, interpreted, evaluated, analyzed, criticized afterward" (Rosenblatt, 1986, p. 124). Rosenblatt (1978) believed readers could make various defensible interpretations of their evocations, but emphasized that some interpretations were more valid than others.

Rosenblatt distinguished aesthetic from efferent reading and viewed these two stances as forming poles of a continuum. In aesthetic reading, the reader "adopts an attitude of readiness to attend to what is being lived through during the reading event" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 74) and focuses on both the private and public aspects of meaning. In efferent reading, "the process of making meaning out of a text involves selective attention to what is to be retained" after the reading as 'residue' (Rosenblatt, 1981, p. 6) and focuses mainly on the public referents of meaning. "The distinction between aesthetic and nonaesthetic reading, then derives ultimately from what the reader does, the stance that he adopts and the activities he carries out in relation to the text" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 27). Rosenblatt believed any text could be read from either a predominantly aesthetic or efferent stance, with most reading events falling somewhere along the aesthetic/efferent continuum.

Interpretive Communities

Fish rejected the conjecture of texts being 'self-sufficient'; that meaning was embedded or encoded in texts. As well, Fish denounced the notion of 'correct interpretation' of texts and believed "readers' interpretive strategies" constituted texts (Mailloux, 1977, p. 414). Fish believed meaning was actively negotiated during the temporal flow of reading and therefore attention should be focused on the reader's interpretive activities. When executed, a reader's interpretive strategies (e.g. looking for themes, assigning significances), "become the large act of reading...[as] they are the shape of reading...they give texts their shape, making them...rather than arising from them" (Fish, 1980, p. 180). As a result of an individual's interpretive strategies (which are learned), "certain expectations about...ways of reading guide the interpretive process and impose severe limitations on the set of acceptable or plausible meanings" (Mailloux, 1977, p. 429).

Fish maintained that interpretive communities evolved and memberships fluctuated as individuals moved from one community to another. He believed interpretive communities were made up of those individuals who "share interpretive strategies...for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning intentions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read" (1980, p. 182). Interpretive communities were preexistent, composed of individuals who shared similar perceptual strategies. Thus meaning was not an individual creation but rather consequential of the application of communal strategies or conventions agreed upon and assimilated by readers.

Chapter Summary

A substantial amount of research on response to literature has examined the content of students' responses. Many researchers have categorized students' written responses in various ways. As well, some individuals have endeavoured to examine qualitative aspects of students' written responses. Research has also demonstrated the significant influence of teachers on students' responses to literature. Therefore, it seems imperative for teachers to be cognizant of and reflective about their theoretical beliefs. The particular reader-response orientation(s) espoused by teachers will affect their expectations of and approaches to the use of literature and response writing.

The naturalistic research project reported in this dissertation grew out of the reviewed research as it investigated teachers' and students' perceptions of written responses to literature. Specifically, the study examined students' and teachers' conceptions of the characteristics of a 'good' response. In addition, the research explored students' beliefs about particular aspects of response writing. Further, the study examined teachers' and children's interactions as they conferenced about literature.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

Introduction

A review of the literature revealed that a vast amount of information exists on students' written responses to literature. However, no studies have investigated teachers' and students' perceptions and expectations of the attributes of a 'good' response. The data for this study, which examines the latter, were collected by employing some of the tools of qualitative research.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Selection of the participants and ethical considerations are discussed in the first two sections of the chapter. A description of the methods used to gather the data are included in the third section. Explanations of the techniques used to analyze the data are outlined in the fourth section of the chapter.

Selection of Participants

The location for the research was an elementary Division II classroom in an agriculturally based town in south-central Alberta, Canada. The school had a very large population of elementary students (kindergarten to grade six) and a staff of approximately 40 teachers. The two teachers of the classroom involved in the study were team-teaching 58 children in grades four and five.

In early January, 1993, the researcher spoke with the principal and vice-principal of the school and outlined the purpose of the research. Permission was obtained to carry out the project in the school. The researcher explained to the administration that she was seeking two classrooms in which children's literature was used as the core content of the reading program and where students were writing responses to literature. The administration acknowledged that there were teachers in the school whose language arts program met the researcher's requirements. The vice-principal volunteered to approach the teachers who were using children's literature and literary response, explain the purpose of the research, and ask any interested teachers to contact the researcher to obtain further information.

Two teachers telephoned the researcher and asked questions regarding the purpose of the study and the requirements of their involvement. As the conversation drew to a close, the teachers volunteered to participate in the project, providing the researcher deemed their classroom 'appropriate'.

In mid-February, 1993, the researcher visited the classroom to discern if indeed the students were reading children's literature and writing literature responses. By observing and interacting with the students and teachers, the researcher determined that the classroom would be a suitable site to conduct the study. Hereafter, the two teachers will be called Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez and they called their reading program 'readers' workshop'. A 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the research context has been outlined in the fourth chapter.

Ethical Considerations

A letter was sent home with all of the students explaining the general purposes of the study (see Appendix A). Written consent, indicating the children's willingness to participate in the study and parental permission for the latter, was obtained from both the children and the parents/guardians. The letter informed both the children and the parents/guardians that the students may withdraw from the research project at any time, without penalty. Nonparticipation of students in the study did not alter their regular curricular activities or classroom routines. Those children who were not participating in the study were not considered as possible key informants nor were any of their written responses collected.

The two teachers who volunteered for the research project were informed of their required involvement in the study and were asked to sign a letter of consent outlining the latter (see Appendix A). As well, the letter informed the teachers that they may withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty, by talking with the researcher.

Anonymity was guaranteed to those individuals involved in the research project. Pseudonyms were used for the teachers and the focus students to ensure confidentiality.

Data Collection

General Procedures

Acknowledging that the researcher's presence would affect the actions of both teachers and students, the researcher spent twelve weeks (March 23, 1993 to June 17, 1993) in the classroom to minimize that effect in order to collect as much 'natural' data as possible. Thus, prolonged engagement at the research site was a factor which contributed to the trustworthiness of the findings (Guba, 1981).

A characteristic of qualitative research is that the "contexts of inquiry are not to be contrived or constructed or modified: they are natural and must be taken as they are found" (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 5). Hickman (1984) studied response to literature and focused "on children responding in natural classroom settings" (p. 278). Information about "the context surrounding a given response" assisted in interpreting it (Hickman, 1984, p. 278).

Like Hickman, the researcher observed and took extensive field notes of the 'everyday' life of the elementary classroom; thus, the observations were contextualized in the "natural setting [and were]...the direct source of data" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 27). As well, to collect additional data, tape-recorders were used to audio-record the ensuing 'life' of the classrooms during readers' workshop.

The extensive fieldnotes and transcribed interactions and interviews assisted in conveying a thick description, "the sense of the web of interrelated contextual factors that...[were] associated with the situation under study (Owens, 1982). As well, the use of multiple information sources (i.e. triangulation) provided a rich data base (Guba, 1981; Mathison, 1988; Owens, 1982). This 'slice of life' data, referred to as 'collection of referential adequacy material', involved gathering "materials from the site that relate[d] to [the] findings and interpretations" (Owens, 1982, p. 16). The various sources of data included: extensive field notes; transcriptions of students' and teachers' interviews, of instruction, of students' and teachers' conferences, of book shares and celebrations; and the students' written responses. Data triangulation provided evidence which allowed the researcher to make sense and construct explanations of the social phenomena being studied (Mathison, 1988).

Throughout the data collection period, the researcher engaged in 'peer debriefing or peer consultation' which involved meeting with her thesis supervisor to articulate her thoughts, raise concerns and questions and/or talk through any problems (Guba, 1981; Owens, 1982).

Selection of Focus Children

After a period of four weeks, and in consultation with the teachers, key informants were selected from those students who were allowed to participate in the study. In order to "maximize the range of information uncovered" (Guba, 1981, p. 87), five students from each grade, representing a continuum of academic ability, were chosen. The teachers were asked to explain their reasons for suggesting the children they selected. Six of the ten students were chosen as focus children for this dissertation. The six children, three from each grade, represented a continuum of academic ability.

Audio-recording

As it was impossible to record all of the interactions occurring during readers' workshop, the researcher gathered samples of the various types of activities (i.e. group meetings; work time behaviours and interactions; recorded, independent, and teacher conferences; book shares and celebrations). The interactions of one or two groups of students were recorded per day, centering on the focus children but including groups with no key informants as well. While the researcher recorded the activities of one or two groups of students, she observed and took field notes of another group's interactions. In addition, the lessons of the teachers were audio-recorded. Further, the focus children and teachers were interviewed on several occasions.

The Focus Students

Before commencing the audio-recorded interviews with the students, the researcher explained to the children that there were no correct or incorrect answers to the questions they would be asked. The researcher stated that she was genuinely interested in the children's ideas and opinions. Further, the focus students were informed that they would receive a copy of the transcripts of their interviews to which they could add/delete/change the content.

The children were interviewed during school hours and at a time, considered by their teachers, least disruptive to their class work. All of the focus children were interviewed individually on at least two occasions. During the interviews, the researcher posed the following set of questions (which was prepared beforehand) to the children.

1. Tell me about your reading program last year and this year.
2. Tell me how you select books to read.
3. To you, what does it mean to write responses to the books you read.
4. How do you go about writing a response?
5. What are your feelings about response writing?
6. In your opinion, what makes a 'good' response? Why? Show me some of your responses that you think are good and tell me why you think they are.
7. Do you think there is anything you can do to make your responses better?
8. How does your teacher help you with writing responses?

As a result of the children's answers or comments, spontaneous questions occurred during the interactions as well. Further, the researcher posed additional questions to the students in an attempt to discover as much as she could about the children's understandings and beliefs about writing responses to literature and other response-related issues. The following questions were some of the other queries the researcher posed to the children:

1. How would you describe yourself as a reader? As a writer?
2. Where do you get the ideas from that you include in your responses?
3. Do you think response writing is a worthwhile activity? Why or why not?
4. Do you think you have learned anything by writing responses? If so, what?
5. Would you like to read other people's responses? Why or why not?
6. Do you think there is anything your teachers can do to help you with

response writing?

In the first interview with the students, the researcher asked questions #1-#5 and the first part of question #6 of the first set of outlined questions, as well as additional pertinent questions. At the conclusion of the first interview, the researcher explained to the children that they were to examine the responses in their journal and select some to discuss in their next interview. When speaking with Theodore, one of the focus students, the researcher explained, "Sometime tonight, or tomorrow night, sometime by Thursday, could you please go through your response journal and just tear a piece of paper and mark the responses that you think you did a really good job on or ones that you think aren't so good. And talk to me next time I meet you on Thursday and say, 'Well, Mrs. Pantaleo, I think this one is really good or is not very good or is O.K. because....' and tell me about what you think made that a good response or what didn't make it a good response or what made it an O.K. response." By having the students articulate their beliefs about the characteristics which constituted a 'good' response as well as identify written responses which they felt were 'good', the researcher was able to discover possible discrepancies and/or similarities between cognitive understandings and concrete examples.

The second time the children met with the researcher they discussed the responses they had selected and answered other questions. Some children were interviewed on a third occasion as the researcher needed the children to clarify some of their answers and/or to provide additional information.

The children were asked to read over the transcripts of their interviews and make any additions/deletions/changes they felt necessary. The focus students made no changes to the transcriptions.

The Teachers

Except for when the teachers discussed their educational training and experience with the researcher, Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw chose to be interviewed together. The teachers were interviewed during times they deemed most convenient. Interviews occurred during the teachers' preparation times, after school and outside of school hours.

The teachers and researcher participated in several audio-recorded discussions. During the interviews, the teachers dialogued with the researcher about their program, their educational backgrounds and experiences, and the focus students. They also talked about the written responses that each focus child had selected and discussed with the researcher, commenting upon both the favourable aspects of the work and areas requiring improvement.

After several interviews with the teachers in which they had answered the first three questions (prepared ahead of time and outlined below), the researcher gave them the set of questions. The researcher felt that the teachers would feel more comfortable answering the queries if they had previous time to consider some of the issues addressed by the questions .

1. Tell me about your educational training and experience.
2. Tell me about your language arts program and your reasons and beliefs for organizing it the way you do.
3. Tell me about your views of using children's literature in a reading program.
4. What is your conceptualization of the process of response writing?
5. What are your reasons for having students write responses to the books they read?
6. How do you go about teaching students to respond, in writing, to literature?

What are your expectations?

7. In your opinion, what constitutes a 'good' response and how do you assist children in reaching the latter?
8. What are your beliefs/opinions about the role of the teacher in response writing?

As a result of the teachers' answers or comments, spontaneous questions occurred during the discussions as well.

The teachers were given the transcriptions of their interviews/conversations in order to provide them with an opportunity to add/change/delete any of their verbalizations. They made no changes to the transcripts. Further, the teachers were given copies of the dissertation chapters which described the research context, and analyzed and discussed the conference interactions and the students' written responses. They made no suggestions for additions, modifications or deletions.

Data Analysis

A substantial amount of data was accumulated as a result of this qualitative research project. Interview and classroom transcripts, field notes, introspective researcher notes, and collected documents provided "the basis for explicit descriptions organized in terms of observed recurring patterns (and their exceptions)" (Rosenblatt, 1985b, p. 51).

Teacher and Student Conferences

All of the conference data had at least two passings in order for the researcher to "inductively intuit certain consistent patterns" (Beach, 1985, p. 125) or thematic categories. The analysis of the data was generative as by rereading and working with the transcripts of the teachers' and students' conferences, systems for categorizing the data gradually evolved. The researcher categorized each utterance, "each remark or group of remarks which could be reduced to an essence which" could be assigned to one of the subcategories (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p. 8). For example, the following interaction was coded as one example of 'talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion'.

> Student 1 - But he's left all of his stuff.
> Student 2 - They don't have any stuff.
> Student 1 - Yeah it does! Look in the book. It's a cartoon, Student 2.
> Student 2 - Yeah, I know but there's no stuff.
> Student 1 - Yeah, there's a chair and stuff there - look at it.
> Student 3 - Yeah there is. See. (Points to book and they all look.)

The following example was coded as one example of teacher 'provided background information on something related to text'.

> Yes, a little bit more that way because that was a private school probably modeled after the British system. Then in a lot of the schools in Britain, below the Head Master are the teachers and below them are the senior students and below them are the junior students and below them are the brand new students. And everybody kind of gets to pick on the ones that are below them.

As well, not all utterances were coded as there were interruptions, false starts to sentences, repeated words, phrases or sentences, and insignificant remarks (e.g. Yeah, I know.).

Once the researcher coded the data, she conducted a second passing to establish or confirm "structural corroboration or coherence" in that "every datum and interpretation [was checked] against all others to be certain that there [were] no internal conflicts or contradictions (Guba, 1981, p. 85).

The researcher categorized both the teachers' and the children's interactions which occurred during the teachers' conferences. The researcher believed the latter was necessary in order to 'flesh out' both the quantity and quality of teacher and student contributions in the conferences.

Subsequent to coding and rechecking the classification of the data, the researcher arranged for a 'confirmability audit' to be conducted on a portion of the data. A confirmability audit certifies that "data exist in support of every interpretation and that the interpretations have been made in ways consistent with the available data" (Guba, 1981, p. 73).

A graduate student, knowledgeable about literary theory and response, and children's literature, was given copies of the categorization schemes and one example of a recorded and an independent conference. As well, the individual was given a copy of a conference conducted by each teacher and asked to code both the teachers' and the students' interactions. The researcher did not 'train' the graduate student in how to code the data. (i.e. The researcher did not explain and demonstrate how she used the classification systems and subsequently have the graduate student practice using the schemes in the researcher's presence). Rather, the researcher explained how she categorized each utterance, "each remark or group of remarks which could be reduced to an essence" and then assigned to one of the subcategories (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p. 8). She then used a few examples from the transcripts to exemplify the latter.

When the researcher and the graduate student met to discuss the coding systems, it was apparent that the categorization schemes were indeed credible and trustworthy. The graduate student's coding corroborated the researcher's. Although the exact number of occurrences coded in each subcategory was not identical, the same patterns were evident in both the researcher's and graduate student's analyses (e.g. the dominant type of interaction in Mrs. Perez's conference was tapping students' understandings and/or knowledge of texts, and very little of the students' interactions during recorded and independent conferences were classified as tapping understandings and/or knowledge of texts). Thus the researcher believes the confirmability audit demonstrates the credibility and trustworthiness of the classification schemes (see Figures 1 and 2 below).

Figure 1 - Classification of Student Interactions During Recorded, Independent and Teacher Conferences

Tapped Understandings and/or Knowledge of Texts

1. talked about plot
2. talked about characters
3. talked about setting
   (retelling and/or summarizing)

Extended Understandings of Texts

1. provided explanations for or examples to support ideas
2. talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion
3. talk about what they did not understand
4. made "I wonder" statements
5. hypothesized possible reasons or explanations for "I wonder" statements

Personal Engagement Responses

1. compared novels to other books, movies, people and/or life events
2. made predictions
3. described feelings about some textual aspect
4. empathized with characters or imagined self in characters' positions
5. visualized some aspect of text
6. provided personal opinion
   a) plot
   b) characters
   c) setting
   d) author's technique or style
   e) illustrator and/or illustrations (in text and/or cover)
   f) book as a whole or central idea of text

Figure 2 - Classification of Teachers' Interactions During Teacher Conferences

Tapped Students' Understandings and/or Knowledge of Texts

1. asked questions about text or to find out more information about text (plot, setting, character)

Extended Understandings of Texts

1. helped students articulate thoughts
2. asked students to explain their thoughts
3. asked for clarification of thinking
4. asked questions to extend their thinking
5. provided background information on something related to text

Facilitated Personal Engagement Responses

1. asked students to make comparisons to other books, movies, people and/or life events
2. asked students to describe feelings of particular aspects
3. asked students to make predictions
4. encouraged students to empathize with characters or imagine self in characters' positions
5. asked for students' personal opinions of
    a) plot
    b) characters
    c) setting
    d) author's technique or style
    e) illustrator and/ or illustrations (in text and cover)
    f) book as a whole or central idea of text

Contributed Teacher Personal Responses

1. provided personal examples from own life
2. made comparisons to other books, movies, people and/or life events
3. articulated personal opinion

Addressed Instructional Aspects

1. made instructional comments or suggestions - components of readers' workshop
2. discussed some aspect of the reading process or a reading strategy
3. provided information about literature - structure and/or literary elements

4. provided feedback regarding conferences - positive aspects and areas for improvement

The researcher explored the relationships between the teachers' and the students' interactions during the teacher conferences. In addition, the researcher examined both the similarities and the differences of the students' interactions during the teacher, recorded and independent conferences.

Using a taxonomy developed by Zarrillo and Cox (1992), the researcher examined the 'types of teaching' which occurred during the teachers' conferences. Zarrillo and Cox (1992) developed a taxonomy of literature instruction based on their observations of and interviews with 27 elementary teachers. Through naturalistic inquiry, Zarrillo and Cox gathered data on the teachers' articulations, actions and activities when teaching literature. The researchers categorized their qualitative data according to a scheme based on Rosenblatt's concepts of aesthetic and efferent reading. Each main category was composed of several descriptive subcategories.

Efferent teaching involved teachers asking questions and presenting "instructional tasks that required students to extract information from, or analyze, material they read" (Zarrillo & Cox, 1992, p. 235). Zarrillo and Cox divided efferent teaching into eight subcategories: *structure of language* (i.e. "Words, phrases, and sentences were analyzed for information about their structure" p. 237); *lexical meanings* (i.e meanings of words or phrases); *publication features of the text* (i.e. graphic features, introductory sections, names of illustrators and authors); *text content* (i.e. attention directed "to a set of text facts" p. 239); *information from the text* (i.e. attention directed to "substantive information either embedded in, or related to, the text" p. 240); *analysis of the text* (i.e.

employment of various analytical systems to examine the text); *disassembling the text* (i.e. isolation of particular elements or patterns); and *the text as a medium for generating something else* (i.e. text viewed as a source for other activities) (pp. 237-242). Aesthetic teaching, which encouraged "personal aspects of the lived-through experience - the scenes, associations, images, and feelings called to mind by students while reading" (p. 242) was divided into five subcategories: choice of books, reading situation, or response type; selective attention to text part; imaging and picturing; relating associations and feelings; and hypothesizing and extending (pp. 242-245). The researcher used the subcategories of efferent and aesthetic teaching to examine the teachers' interactions during their conferences.

No doubt the content of the conferences could have been analyzed further but as the focus of the study was the students' written responses to literature, the researcher limited the analyses to the schemes described above.

Written Responses

After several readings of the transcripts of the students' interviews, the researcher recorded and counted the students' criteria of a 'good' response both before and after examining their response journals. As well, the specific and general areas the students identified as requiring improvement in their written responses to literature were tabulated. The teachers' statements regarding 'good' responses and areas needing improvement were also noted and calculated.

The researcher also examined the degree of consistency between what the children reported they did when they wrote responses and the actual content of the responses (i.e. were the students doing what they said they were doing). As well, the researcher investigated the extent to which the children provided 'reasons' to explain their ideas. Further, the researcher examined the inclusion of unrelated ideas and the flow or the cohesiveness of the responses.

In addition, the researcher employed a categorization scheme developed by Many and Cox (1992b) to characterize the stance of the students' responses (i.e. aesthetic/efferent continuum). Many and Cox (1992b) used a reader-response perspective to examine grade five students' free written responses to literature and film. They developed classification systems "to characterize stance on an efferent to aesthetic continuum, and level of personal understanding reached" (p. 37).

Rosenblatt distinguished efferent from aesthetic reading and viewed these two stances as forming poles of a continuum (1978, 1981, 1988, 1991b). Cox and Many used Rosenblatt's notion of a stance continuum and Corcoran and Evans's (1987) descriptions of "the four basic types of mental activity...involved in aesthetic reading: picturing and imaging, anticipating and retrospecting, engagement and construction, and valuing and evaluating" (Corcoran & Evans, 1987, p. 44) as the bases of their stance classification system.

When classifying the stance of a response Cox and Many did not count and compare the number of efferent to aesthetic statements, but rather stance was "determined by the overall or primary focus of the responder's attention whether the response was based on analysis or evocation" (1992b, p. 44). Like Cox and Many, the researcher looked at the 'essence' or the overall focus of the children's responses to determine their classification along the aesthetic/efferent continuum.

The researcher used the five-point scheme developed by Cox and Many (1992b) to classify the stance of the students' written responses along the efferent/aesthetic continuum. Point one depicted the most efferent responses. Responses of this type contained clear evidence of efferent analysis, where students focused on what was learned, or information gained, or critical and literary analysis. Vince's response to The Vandarian Incident illustrated this type of response.

> I thot that this chapter gave alot of informtion this book is about a boy hwo is on the last corss he will be the first person to finish if he does.

Responses classified at the second point along the continuum, primarily efferent responses, focused on retelling the text and retelling with judgment or preference statements. None of the students' written responses were classified as primarily efferent responses. Responses classified along the midpoint of the continuum contained elements of both "aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis without a primary emphasis on either" (Cox & Many, 1992b, p. 48). The following response by Theodore was characteristic of responses classified at the midpoint of the continuum.

> Now this was probably favorite chapter. In chapters 9, 10, and 11, there has being more and more action. In chapter's 9 and 10 there was a forest fire, a contest on "why I love books" and the teachers broken foot. Now, if all books had more action like this, theyd all be best sellers.

The fourth point along the continuum, primarily aesthetic responses, depicted responses in which selective attention was given to specific parts of the text (i.e. "a statement of preference, a judgment of the quality of the story or of characters' behaviour, or an impression about story events or people in the story" Cox & Many, 1992b, p. 49). For example:

> I wonder who is crying in the night because I don't think that it is

> just a baby like Ashley's mom says.
>
> I wonder why Ashley thinks Mrs. Cooper is going to take Anna-Marrey away from her. If I were Ashley I wouldent listen to Mrs. Cooper and I would just go in the garden. If I were Ashley I wouldent have ran out to get Anna-Marrey in the middle of the night I would go in the day because Anna-Marrey has allready been out side for a long time it wouldent hert for her to be out a little longer.

Responses classified along the fifth point of the continuum, the most aesthetic responses, contained clear evidence of students' lived-through experiences with text (i.e. "attention centered on the ideas, scenes, images, associations, or feelings called to mind during the reader's transaction with the text" Cox & Many, 1992b, p. 50). Of the written responses which the focus students discussed with the researcher, there were no examples of entries which would be classified as the most aesthetic responses.

As well as examining the students' written responses, the researcher perused the transcripts of the students' interviews and searched for reoccurring patterns in the children's answers to other questions about response-related issues and readers' workshop.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this research project employed qualitative research methods to collect the data. The classroom observations, the audio-recordings of instruction, conferences and interviews, and the students' written responses to literature provided a rich source of data to analyze. The analyses of the data examined the various types of interactions which occurred during the conferences and the relationships between the latter, the students' and teachers' criteria of a 'good' written response to literature, the students' and teachers' beliefs of the areas of responses requiring improvement, the stance of the responses (aesthetic/efferent continuum), and the reoccurring patterns in the students' answers to questions about response-related issues and readers' workshop.

CHAPTER 4

The Research Context

Introduction

A 'thick description' of the research context is described in the fourth chapter. Profiles of the teachers and the classroom are presented in the first section of the chapter. A description of the reading program is divided into seven subsections. The following aspects of the reading program, readers' workshop, are examined: materials, origins, introduction to students, mechanics (including a description of a typical morning), changes, and evaluation.

Profiles

The Teachers

Mrs. Shaw had approximately 20 years of elementary teaching experience. Mrs. Shaw's ambition had been to be a band director. Upon completion of her five-year program in Music Education, she had taught music to children in grades K-6 for approximately four years. Once she had experienced the enjoyment and satisfaction of being a 'regular' classroom teacher, the direction of her career changed as she wished to remain an elementary generalist rather than to pursue a music or band position.

Since completing her degree, Mrs. Shaw had not taken any other courses but had attended numerous workshops both within and outside of her school jurisdiction. She expressed a desire to remain current on both pedagogical theory and practice. She explained, "The way I've always been is I guess--you know I'm always looking for--maybe innovative is the word. Not doing something new for the sake of doing something new but because it's better."

Mrs. Perez had received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1972 and a Diploma in Education the following year. For the first six years of her teaching career, she had taught grades 2-6 and Home Economics. Although Mrs. Perez had no formal training in Home Economics, she had set up a program in a northern Alberta school. After an eight-year absence, Mrs. Perez had returned to the teaching profession in 1988.

Mrs. Perez stated that she had been to numerous workshops and inservice sessions. She believed her absence from the teaching profession affected her eagerness and enthusiasm for attending professional development sessions. She stated, "I was new, I was fresh and it was like, 'Yes, this is interesting. Let's do it. Let's find out.' So my perspective has been a little bit different than teachers who have been with it a long time and are now having to change."

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez had volunteered to be inserviced on the Alberta Math Diagnostic Program when it was initially introduced in the province. Since the completion of their training, they had conducted several workshops on the program. As well, they had offered workshops on readers' workshop within their school district.

Throughout the study, the researcher found both Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw to be extremely cooperative and helpful. In addition to the conversations which occurred during the numerous interviews, the teachers and the researcher had many informal discussions about various educational and personal matters (e.g. their school evaluation form, report cards, committees, team teaching, students, evaluation, etc.). The teachers seemed to be exceedingly honest and candid in their answers to the many questions posed by the researcher. As well, the teachers openly discussed concerns and difficulties they had experienced and/or continued to experience with the implementation of their reading program.

During the last interview with the teachers (June 22, 1993), the researcher asked them to comment upon their involvement in the study. Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez acknowledged that examining and discussing the students' responses had been highly beneficial. Mrs. Shaw stated, "I don't go back to the beginning enough and when we had to do that, I found that really interesting." Mrs. Perez articulated appreciation of the researcher's comments arising from observations of and interviews with the students. She stated, "I really found that excellent...it gave me a whole new perspective." Mrs. Shaw agreed saying, "Yes, a different insight and a third party."

Both teachers expressed sincere enjoyment at being involved in the research project. Mrs. Perez stated, "I've really enjoyed it" and Mrs. Shaw thought that it had "been great." They also discussed their comfort level with the researcher.

> Mrs. Shaw - ...I think that we've just sort of felt comfortable with each other.
> Mrs. Perez - But see if you would have been a different kind of person, we might not have been [so open].
> Mrs. Shaw - That's right. Exactly.
> Mrs. Perez - So that has a lot to do with you.
> Mrs. Shaw - Yes, you know it's been a good thing--I felt real comfortable with it.

The teachers also noted how they felt the researcher had been nonjudgmental while in the classroom.

> Mrs. Shaw - But I don't have the feeling of judgmental you know.

> Researcher - I'm not here to do that.
> Mrs. Shaw - But I don't have that feeling.
> Mrs. Perez - No.
> Mrs. Shaw - And therefore you can relax.
> Mrs. Perez - But it would show if you thought that way.
> Mrs. Shaw - That's right.

The teachers also believed it had been vital for the researcher to be in the classroom for the length of time she had been in order to understand the context of the situation.

> Researcher - I was here to see what was going on and to hear what you and the children had to say.
> Mrs. Perez - In the context of how we deliver it.
> Mrs. Shaw - Exactly.
> Mrs. Perez - See, without the context to situate your research in, it's not, I don't think valid.

The researcher asked Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw if their participation in the study had caused them to reflect on or examine their beliefs and practices.

> Mrs. Shaw - Most definitely.
> Mrs. Perez - I think it's caused us to reflect but I don't think it's changed anything.
> Mrs. Shaw - It hasn't changed anything so much as really caused us to reflect which inadvertently I think will...
> Mrs. Perez - Does probably.
> Mrs. Shaw - Affect--like things when we were looking at their response journals.

It seemed that the teachers' involvement in the research endeavour had contributed to their professional development.

The Class

The teachers explained how the children were not "hand picked" for their classroom even though their organization and structure differed from other rooms in the school (i.e. the team teaching situation and the fact that the children spent both grades 4 and 5 in Mrs. Perez's and Mrs. Shaw's class).

Four of the 58 students in the classroom were receiving language arts instruction from the learning assistance teacher and left the room during readers' workshop time. In general, the teachers felt the "bulk of the grade 4 students" were on the "low side of average" and the majority of the grade 5 children were "high average." Overall, they felt their students represented a "regular cross section." The researcher's opinion of the academic composition of the class (which was based on observations of and discussions with the students, and examination of their work) concurred with the teachers' descriptions.

The Program - Readers' Workshop

Children's Literature

As the material the students read during readers' workshop was children's literature, the researcher asked the teachers to discuss their views of using children's literature in their program. The teachers stated that they wanted their students to experience the enjoyment and magic of good literature. They hoped the children would develop a love of reading and become better readers by reading quality texts. Mrs. Perez stated, "It's an incentive for them to read other literature. And I think that's critical because often times children don't grow up in an environment where there's an incentive to read literature and have exposure to good literature and good authors."

> Mrs. Perez - We're not teaching the mechanics of reading--they already know how to sound out words, they already have a sight vocabulary so we're not concerned really with making sure that we have material that has a graduated list of words that they should be learning. I suppose it comes from the whole language philosophy that children learn to read by reading and they learn to write by writing and they learn to speak by speaking. They learn to conference by conferencing. I guess what we're trying to do is give kids a love of reading--I think that's probably a big underlying reason for why we use literature. We're trying to

> communicate to them the magic and the joy of really getting into some good literature.

The teachers also believed the use of children's literature enhanced the students' development of strategies for reading in the real world "because it's not watered down to the vocabulary that somebody decided was appropriate to their age and it provides for stimulating discussion. Some of the other types of reading material, there's no where to go with it. And in children's literature, they can go deeper into the material than just knowledge and comprehension levels which is about as far as you can go with a lot of formulized reading for kids."

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw explained how they used their classroom budget to purchase novels. As well, they bought books with their personal funds. The teachers believed they knew "children's literature fairly well" because they each had children. When selecting books, they searched "for the fiction, the authors that the kids like and the award winners and we try to pick as good as high quality but then sometimes you have to have some just plain fun for the little boys." The teachers acknowledged that they had not read all of the books in their readers' workshop collection.

> Mrs. Shaw - Most, no. We have read a lot and we have read a good many. We can't keep up with all of them. And we've gotten to know the books through the conferences, through the celebrations but there's a lot of them I'd say we read.

The Program

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez had been team teaching for three years. Previous to setting up their classroom, they had visited another school and observed a kindergarten/grade one team teaching situation. During their visitation, they had been invited into a classroom where readers' workshop was being used. Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez were impressed by the program and felt that it would be "an excellent way to teach" their students. Thus the team teaching situation had been in place previous to deciding the format of the reading program.

The teachers believed readers' workshop allowed the children to get "into the meat of comprehension rather than just the surface comprehension." As well, they also asserted that readers' workshop taught the students about communication. Further, the teachers felt the children learned "life skills" in the program as they had to cooperate, be courteous, listen, respect others' opinions, and respond to others.

Mrs. Shaw believed that orally discussing texts and writing responses would help the students in Junior and Senior High School.

> Mrs. Shaw - ...my son will have a report to write and he hasn't a clue where to start. And I'll give him this mind map, I'll give him these suggestions and he can take that and use it. We didn't use to do that. Those kids have missed out on this and then they get to Jr./Sr. High and they're told to "Write an essay about this story and explain your ideas and explain your..." They don't know how! Well give me some questions to answer and then I can do it. They don't know where to start because they haven't...And this will hopefully make a carry over to what you know--to write a paper--to what you need to really do in life.

Introducing Readers' Workshop

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez explained how the basic structure of the program had been modeled after the teacher they had observed on their interschool visitation. However, they had instituted changes and implemented new components. The teachers described how over the past three years the basic backbone of readers' workshop had remained constant, but various experiences had altered or changed aspects of the program.

The teachers believed that if they "were going to teach the students how to do readers' workshop" they "had to model it all." Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw described how they explained and modeled each component of readers' workshop previous to having the students work in their groups. Approximately four months into the school year, they introduced the various parts of the program via a class novel which they read with/to the students.

> Mrs. Perez - And also from the outset we read to/with them. So that each student has a copy of the book and we bring them up to the front and they bring their books with them and one of us reads out loud. The purpose of that being that they get use to hearing expression, pauses, they learn how dialogue works when they hear it and see it at the same time. So what we're trying to do is teach them to read for more understanding of the actual story and as we read, right from the beginning, we stop often to talk about plot, character and setting and how it is advancing the story--how the author is crafting the story. And we point that out quite a bit.

The teachers explained that they had decided to focus on setting, plot and characters as they believed those to be the three main elements of a story. They felt those aspects provided a "skeleton" for the students - "some bedrock" from which the children could operate.

> Mrs. Shaw - So that those three things become--that they know exactly what we're talking about within the story because that whole mind map depends on plot, character and setting. And if it's necessary, we actually do individual lessons and work just on plot, just on--within that. But not right away.
> Mrs. Perez - We do some practice with them. Some actual practice on identifying setting, plot and character.

Subsequent to discussing setting, plot and characters with the students, the teachers introduced the mind map (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Response Journal Mind Map

Questions

I wonder about...
I don't understand...
Why did the author...

Comparison

This reminds me of...
I know someone like...

Predictions

I predict that...

Criticisms

I question whether...
The author could have...

RESPONSE

JOURNAL

Visualizations

I noticed...
I can see...

Feeling

I don't understand...
I felt...
When this happens to me, I feel...
I felt sorry...
I was happy...

Personal

If I were _____ I would have...
What impressed me was...
When this happens to me, I feel...
One time, I...

Opinions

I can see...
What impressed me with this chapter was...
I felt, in my opinion...
It was not fair...
It was fair...
I think _____ was a believable character because....

The mind map had originated during the teachers' first year of implementing readers' workshop when they had asked their students to categorize specific ideas on a response starter sheet. The teachers had continued to use the same mind map and stated that they introduced "one or two responses [from the mind map] at a time and practice[d] just writing a response." The teachers noted how they initially talked "through it [a response type] first" and did "some oral examples." Subsequently the children were asked to "respond to the same passage [of the class novel] at the same time using the same aspect [response type]." As the class was reading a common novel, the teachers believed the students were able to hear the thoughts of others and learn from this sharing. Mrs. Shaw noted how the students' written responses often started out in a "very formulated manner."

Mrs. Shaw continued describing the introduction of the program.

> And this is condensing it but then we take that and put it into the letter form, we give them a letter form we want them to use and they have to copy that. So now that they've practiced all these responses, they can take it and put it into our form. And then from there, we start just introducing one--conferencing next. And it would be the middle conference that we would teach first which is just your plain old--how do you converse about it. It is a natural transition from the response journal. We respond orally and we model that by having other teachers come in.

The teachers explained how other adults (e.g. janitor, librarian, principal, other teachers) and themselves modeled 'how to' conference about a book. At the completion of the conference, the teachers critiqued the discussion and highlighted the types of interactions, the procedures, and the expectations for conferences (i.e. "the hitchhiking, the responding, the courtesy"). The students then practiced conferencing and discussed their interactions with their peers and teachers.

Mrs. Shaw explained how they introduced the other types of conferences to the students as well.

> Mrs. Shaw - We just show them the differences between them and one by one, just as they're ready and while we're reading our novel, we keep adding components of the different conferences and then when we're ready to let them go on their own, we add the group meeting, setting their goals and their goal sheet. We just keep adding things until they're ready to go--doing the book share and celebration activities last because

> we don't really need that right away. As a group gets to it, enough of them have done it from the year before that we can just sort of--and we didn't do them for Harriet because we wanted to get them on their own books and then we introduced that.

Both teachers discussed the importance of periodically reviewing the procedures and expectations of each component of readers' workshop with the class. Mrs. Perez stated, "You know we're getting to the point now--if the year weren't over, it's time to kind of start doing them over." Mrs. Shaw concurred, "They're getting sloppy again on some of the things and we need to redo some but we thought we would wait until next year."

The Mechanics of Readers' Workshop

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw explained how readers' workshop was not implemented until they knew "the kids well enough to group them." The teachers' two main considerations for grouping the students were reading ability and personality. Mrs. Perez explained, "We group them homogeneous so similar ability readers together and personality, again based on our knowledge of the kids. We try and put kids together who can work together to avoid big conflicts and avoid big parties." The teachers described how the students began working in their groups while the class was reading a common novel. The teachers admitted that every year, the memberships of some groups changed before the students started working independently.

> Mrs. Perez - We make sure we let them start working in groups well before the end of the book so that we can make changes. And that's why that has to be done before they get off into different books because if we have to make a change, it has to be done while we're all still reading the same book.
> Mrs. Shaw - It's hard to do it when they start their own books.

The schedule of activities for the 14 groups of students was posted at the back of the room on a large chart (Daily Itinerary Chart - see Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Readers' Workshop Daily Itinerary Chart

Day	A	B	C	D	E	F
1.	TC	RJ(T)	RC	FREE	RJ	IC
2.	TC	RJ(T)	RC	FREE	RJ	IC
3.	IC	TC	RJ(T)	RC	FREE	RJ
4.	IC	TC	RJ(T)	RC	FREE	RJ
5.	RJ	IC	TC	RJ(T)	RC	FREE
6.	RJ	IC	TC	RJ(T)	RC	FREE
7.	FREE	RJ	IC	TC	RJ(T)	RC
8.	FREE	RJ	IC	TC	RJ(T)	RC
9.	RC	FREE	RJ	IC	TC	RJ(T)
10.	RC	FREE	RJ	IC	TC	RJ(T)
11.	RJ(T)	RC	FREE	RJ	IC	TC
12.	RJ(T)	RC	FREE	RJ	IC	TC
13.	RJ	RC	FREE	RJ	IC	TC
14.	RJ	RC	FREE	RJ	IC	TC

TC - teacher conference
IC - independent conference
RC - recorded conference
RJ - response journal
RJ(T) - response journal to hand in to teacher
FREE - free day

The chart outlined the activities each group was to complete during work time of readers' workshop (i.e. response journal, independent conference, recorded conference, teacher conference, or free day). As readers' workshop occurred on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, a complete chart rotation took two weeks.

Because of the large number of children, an adjacent room was used as well during readers' workshop time. Each group, which consisted of 2-4 students, worked in a particular area in one of the two rooms. After two complete rotations of the Daily Itinerary Chart, Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez changed designated rooms.

In both classrooms, charts describing the procedures and requirements of the particular components of readers' workshop were posted in visible locations (see Figure 15 in Appendix B).

Group Meeting

Before moving to their designated room and/or area, each group was to check the Daily Itinerary Chart to ensure that they knew what to do during 'work time'. The initial activity of readers' workshop, the 'group meeting', was to be approximately five minutes in duration. During the daily group meeting, the students were to check on their last day's goals; set their reading goals; and discuss what they would be doing during work time. The children were to record the date, the name of their book, their reading goal, and the activity to be completed during work time on the goal sheets glued in the back of their response journals. It seemed that 10-12 pages was the average reading goal of the groups.

At the end of March, the teachers conducted a lesson on the expectations and procedures of a group meeting as they had noticed that some groups were not following the outlined steps. The researcher's observations concurred with the teachers' observations. After the teachers' mini lesson, there seemed to be a noticeable improvement in the students' adherence to the procedures of a group meeting.

Work Time

'Work time' followed the completion of the group meeting. During work time, which was approximately 20 minutes in duration, the children were to complete one of the following activities: write in their response journals; conduct an independent or recorded or teacher conference; or work on their book share or celebration. If scheduled for a 'FREE' day, a group could choose from any of the aforementioned activities or read silently. Overwhelmingly, the students chose to read when they had a 'FREE' day.

Literature Responses

During a rotation, the students wrote literature responses twice and handed in their journal once to the teacher. When writing responses, the students were to follow both the content and format guidelines of the initial response entry they had copied into their journals.

Dear Mrs. Shaw or Mrs. Perez,

I am reading Harriet the Spy, by Louise Fitzhugh. Today I am on page 132.

In this section I will respond in writing to what I have just read. I must remember to respond in different ways using my mind map, and comment on plot, character and setting. I must be sure to give reasons for my responses.

Yours truly,

The researcher's observations revealed that the groups varied in their on-task behaviours during response writing time. Several groups conversed while writing their journal entries and it seemed that a substantial amount of the children's dialogue was unrelated to the novels they were reading or to the content of their responses.

Independent Conferences

During an independent conference, the students were to discuss the book they were reading (or were about to read or had read). At the completion of their conference, they were to evaluate various components of the conference. The students were to assess each of following aspects of their conference out of a possible score of 10: contributions from everyone; courtesy; member preparation/staying on topic; hitchhiking on ideas; and quality of responses. As well, each group member was to write a comment about the conference at the bottom of the evaluation sheet (see Figure 17 in Appendix C).

Recorded Conferences

A chart outlining the specific format for recorded conferences was posted in each classroom. Once the children had located a tape recorder from the closet and inserted their tape, they were to identify the group members by using their own voices; identify the title, author, page number, date and type of conference; hold the conference (i.e. discuss the book); rewind the tape to the beginning of the conference; and hand in the tape to the teacher who was in their room.

Teacher Conferences

Once, during each rotation, a group had a conference with the teacher who was in their room. These conferences provided the teachers an opportunity to solely focus their attention on one group for 10-15 minutes. (Chapter 5 has included an analyses and discussion of the teacher, recorded and independent conferences.)

Prereading Conferences

The children participated in specific types of conferences during their independent, recorded and teacher conferences. Previous to beginning a new book, the children were to engage in a prereading conference. In this type of conference, the group was to orally compose a story using the chapter titles and to generate a chart, web or map tieing the group's background knowledge to the story (see Figure 16 in Appendix B). As well, each group member was to compose two questions which he/she hoped would be answered by reading the book.

Middle Conferences

Middle conferences occurred while the students were reading their novels (regardless of what page they were on). Specific guidelines for middle conferences were posted on a chart as well.

1. What is a conference?
   A conference is a conversation where you and your group members discuss what you have read.

2. When you conference
   a) respond to each other's comments
   b) hitchhike or piggyback on each other's ideas
   c) stay on topic
   d) be courteous
   e) all members contribute and take part
   f) watch your voice level

3. Remember
   Use the ideas you have learned from your response journal as sentence starters.

Postreading Conferences

A postreading conference occurred when the children had completed their novel. The students were to discuss the answers to the questions they had generated during the prereading conference. As well, the children were to discuss what they had found to be surprising or interesting and what they had learned by reading the novel. In addition, the students were to evaluate each of the following aspects out of a possible score of 10: the book as a whole, the plot, the setting, and the characters. If the group had extra time in their conference, they were to use their mind maps and discuss other aspects of the book.

Book Shares

Once the students had completed a postreading conference, they had one class (90 minutes) to plan and practice their book share. The children were to write out their evaluations of the book they had read (i.e. the book as a whole, the plot, the characters and the setting). As well, the children were to write a summary of the novel. If time allowed and interest was sufficient, the students were allowed to create a poster to accompany their presentation. The children practiced and then presented their book share to the class by reading their evaluations and summary (see Figure 18 in Appendix C).

Book Celebrations

Once the book share was complete, the students were allowed three days (120 minutes) to prepare and practice a book celebration activity. If a group experienced difficulties generating an activity for their book celebration, they could refer to a celebration idea chart posted in the main classroom. While in the classroom, the researcher observed many celebration activities (e.g. role playing of authors and characters, 'Wanted' posters of characters, plasticine models of settings of books, advertisements about books, a version of a popular T.V. game show, etc.). The researcher was unable to see all of the book shares and celebrations during the data collection period as some were presented in the afternoons.

Once a group had finished their novel, the book share and celebration activities took precedence over the other components outlined on the Daily Itinerary Chart. For example, if a group was scheduled to conduct a recorded conference but was involved in their book celebration, then they would continue with their activity and not complete the recorded conference.

Reading Time

Once work time was over, the students were to read silently for 15-20 minutes. Those groups working on book shares and celebrations were allowed to continue with their activities. It seemed that some groups did not use the reading time productively as there was substantial noise in the classrooms on several occasions and there were always students displaying off-task behaviours (e.g. talking, socializing, watching or listening to others).

Wrap-up

Following the completion of reading time, five minutes was allocated for 'wrap-up'. During wrap-up, the children were to check to see that everyone had completed their goal; discuss what they had done during the day (and if there were problems or conflicts, they were to generate some solutions); assess their timing or pacing (e.g. How much more time do we have to spend on our book share or celebration activity?); fill in the 'achieved section' on their goal charts (at the back of their journals); and clean up.

At the end of March, the teachers conducted a lesson on the expectations and procedures of wrap-up as they had noticed some groups were not following the outlined steps. The researcher's observations concurred with the teachers' observations. After the teachers' mini-lesson, there seemed to be a noticeable improvement in the students' adherence to the procedures of wrap-up.

In general, the students completed the various activities of readers' workshop as described above.

A Typical Morning

Classes began at 8:55 a.m. The teachers initially dealt with 'house keeping' items (e.g. attendance, collection of money, announcements). While the teachers performed these tasks, the students were to read silently or work on other assignments. Generally, the students complied with the teachers' expectations. The teachers always wrote a daily timetable on the blackboard for the students (e.g. 9:00-10:05 - readers' workshop; 10:05-10:25 - French; 10:25-10:40 - recess; 10:40-11:15 - math; 11:15-11:50 - musical practice; 11:50-12:35 - lunch; 12:35-1:10 - centres; 1:10-1:45 - problem solving; 1:45-2:05 - recess; 2:05-3:15 - art).

Once the 'house keeping' items were attended to, readers' workshop began in one of three ways. On some days, book shares or celebrations were presented by students. On other mornings, the teachers conducted mini-lessons on aspects of readers' workshop (e.g. the procedures for wrap-up, group meetings, and recorded conferences; the importance of correct punctuation and capitalization in journal entries; the strategy of jotting down notes while reading; and the importance of explaining ideas in responses). On some days there were no preliminary activities before the students moved into their groups and began readers' workshop.

The teachers always posted a schedule in each room of the time allocations for each component of readers' workshop (e.g. 9:10-9:15 - group meeting; 9:15-9:35 - work time; 9:35-9:55 - reading time; 9:55-10:00 - wrap-up). Thus the students were able to monitor and manage their time. As well, the teachers often reminded the students of transition times for other activities.

Once the students moved to their designated room and/or area, they began their group meetings, turning to their goal sheets at the back of their journals. While the students were engaging in their group meetings, the teachers moved about from group to group, determining if the children had achieved their previous day's goal and inquiring of their work time activities. Once the teachers had 'checked-in' with each group, they then moved to the group scheduled for a teacher conference. In general, the other students refrained from interrupting the teachers when they were conferencing with a group.

After the group meetings, there was 20 minutes for work time. As stated previously, the children engaged in one of the following activities during work time: wrote in their response journals; conducted an independent or recorded conferenced; engaged in a teacher conference; or worked on their book share or celebration.

At the completion of work time, the children read silently for 15 to 20 minutes. During this reading time, the teachers often moved about the room making observations, asking questions or giving directions. As well, they would always write anecdotal comments on their clipboards during reading time. In addition, the teachers would usually converse with each other about the morning's interactions.

When wrap-up was over, the students reconvened in the main classroom. Sometimes, book shares or celebrations were presented to the class at this time. On a few mornings, the teachers used the last 10 or 15 minutes of the time block for French instruction. On some days, there was no remaining time and the children were dismissed for recess.

Changes to Readers' Workshop

The teachers explained how they had modified the program since its inception. They had instituted a checklist sheet which outlined the various components of readers' workshop to be completed by the children. The teachers had found that some students were not completing all of the required steps. The checklists were glued to brown envelopes in which the students were to keep their novels and response journals. The children were to check off the different activities as they completed them. Secondly, the students were now assessing the 'quality' of their oral responses in the independent conferences. The teachers had conducted a lesson on the criteria constituting 'quality' responses (outlined in the following section) as they felt the children were capable of evaluating their responses. Thirdly, the procedures for recorded conferences had been altered as the students were no longer allowed to shut off the tape while engaging in recorded conferences. As well, the teachers had added mini-lessons on aspects of the program which they believed or had discovered required further attention.

Evaluation

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw also explained how they had added the evaluation component to the program. The teachers evaluated the students' conferences, written responses, time on task, achieved goals, book shares, and book celebrations (see Appendix C for evaluation examples). They evaluated each component out of a possible mark of 10. The teachers acknowledged how their evaluations were "tempered by the child" they were looking at.

The teachers evaluated the students' recorded and teacher conferences (see Figures 19 - 22 in Appendix C). As well, the students evaluated their independent conferences (see Figure 17 in Appendix C). The teachers explained how they did not include the independent conference scores when calculating marks for reporting purposes as they felt the children were overly generous in their evaluations.

Three criteria were used to assess the 'quality' of the content of the conferences. The teachers wanted the students to respond to plot, setting and characters in their conferences. Mrs. Shaw explained, "Not necessarily right in that one but you can go back and see--do they always comment just on the setting or just on the plot. Are they commenting on each of them." Secondly, the teachers expected the students to respond in a variety of ways. Mrs. Perez stated, "It might be a comparison, it might be an opinion, it might be a personal--so that they're not always saying, 'I like the part', 'I like the part.'" Thirdly, the students were expected to provide explanations or reasons for their answers. As stated previously, the teachers explained how they had conducted a mini-lesson on 'quality' of responses and had explicitly discussed the three elements with the students. As well, the children had copied the criteria into their response journals (i.e. the initial response entry).

Quality of responses was only one aspect of the conferences which was evaluated. Contributions from all members, courtesy, member preparation/staying on topic, and hitchhiking on ideas/responding were the other areas evaluated by both the children (independent conferences) and the teachers (recorded and teacher conferences). As well, the evaluation sheets for each type of conference had a section for 'other comments'. Mrs. Perez stated that she particularly looked for "the flow--the responding to each other" in conferences; if indeed the students were engaged in a "compelling conversation where everybody was into it." Mrs. Shaw concurred with the latter stating that "responding is the key to a conference that flows."

> Mrs. Perez - And see the reason it's the key is that if children don't respond to each other's ideas then they're not listening to each other's ideas and when they listen to each other, they learn from each other. The learning that goes on in readers' workshop, a great deal of it happens between children--children learning from children with the teacher acting as a guide.

The teachers' anecdotal records included documentation of the students' completion of goals and on-task behaviours (see Figures 23 and 24 in Appendix C). Mrs. Perez explained how "if they [the students] set consistently high quality goals, they would get a higher mark for achieving those than if they set small goals." However, the teachers discussed how their judgments of the students' goals were tempered by their knowledge of the children.

The teachers acknowledged how they evaluated the students' written responses based on "where they [students] are at." Mrs. Perez explained that "we'll read their response journals and maybe give them 6 or 7 and it really--like from another child, it would be a 2 or 3, but I mean that's where they are." At the commencement of the program in the 1992-93 school year, the teachers had initially assigned a numerical mark to the students' written responses (i.e. on the page of the entry). However, they discovered that the children compared their marks and focused their attention on the numerical score rather than the written comments. Therefore, the teachers had discontinued the practice of assigning a mark on the children's journal entries and recorded the scores only in their record books.

In addition, the teachers no longer informed the students of the marks they received for their book shares, book celebrations and teacher conferences.

Again, the teachers articulated concern about student emphasis on the numerical score. Mrs. Perez stated, "So now I think they are paying more attention to what we are saying."

The teachers acknowledged how they were now more critical in their critiques of the book shares and celebrations than previously (see Figures 25 and 26 in Appendix C). Mrs. Perez noted, "And I think probably this year, I'm noticing that we're being much more critical in our critique afterwards than we ever have been before and maybe it's because after three years of this we're starting to expect more." The teachers felt that their most valuable evaluation was the oral feedback they gave the students after the book shares and celebrations. Mrs. Perez believed that the book shares had improved as a result of teacher emphasis on the need for the students to support their numerical assessments with quality explanations.

> Mrs. Perez - And that's just come this year because we've really stressed that. And I know that sometimes it seems really formulized to say to them I'd like 2 reasons rather just one but it gives them something concrete to aim towards--like I can't think of anything else but I only have one so let's see if there's one other thing that I can absolutely pry from my mind. And I think it encourages them to go a little deeper, try a little harder.

They felt the critiques after the book shares and celebrations had been the catalysts for the improvements they had witnessed in those activities.

The teachers noted how their students' marks clustered at the top half of a "bell curve". They felt that "no child should fail at this program unless they're not putting out." Mrs. Shaw also discussed the necessity of providing appropriate reading materials in order for the children to experience success. As well, Mrs. Perez mentioned the importance of the composition of the reading groups, noting that "it's not fair to a child if he's in a group that's dysfunctional [because] then that child won't have the same opportunities to learn as another child."

In addition to the changes in evaluation, the teachers had also altered aspects of the teacher conferences. The teachers' conferences have been discussed indepth in the following chapter.

Chapter Summary

Readers' workshop was a multifaceted program which used children's literature as the core reading material. The children conferenced about the literature they read with members of their reading groups and with their teachers. As well, the students wrote responses about the literature they read. Further, the children completed book shares and book celebrations. The teachers evaluated the students' conferences, written responses, time on task, achieved goals, book shares, and book celebrations.

CHAPTER 5

Teacher and Student Conferences

Introduction

An analyses and discussion of the three types of conferences (i.e. teacher, recorded and independent) are included in the fifth chapter. The chapter is organized into three major sections, each consisting of various subsections. The first section examines the conferences of both teachers. For each teacher's conferences, both the teacher's and the students' interactions, as well as a discussion of the relationships of the latter, are presented. In addition, a general discussion of the teachers' interactions during their conferences is included. An analyses and discussion of the students' recorded and independent conferences are presented in the second and third major sections of the chapter. Further, a discussion of the students' interactions in all three types of conferences has been included.

Teacher Conferences

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez discussed how the teacher conferences had changed over the past three years. When they first started the program, the teachers believed they were to listen and to evaluate; to be nonparticipants in the conferences. However, the teachers realized that they were 'listeners' when they listened to the students' recorded conferences and therefore felt free to become more actively involved in the teacher conferences. They discussed how they "couldn't help being more of a guide" in the conferences and now described their roles as both teacher and participant. Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez explained how they now viewed the teacher conferences as an opportunity to "model conferencing. To model and to teach new ideas with the plot and the setting...and to do some teaching through questioning and through questions. It's a one-on-one lesson. That's almost what it ends up being is a mini-lesson."

The teachers also mentioned how the composition of each teacher conference differed.

> Mrs. Perez - And see the teacher conferences too--they're all so different. One teacher [conference] will end up being a lecture....
> Mrs. Shaw - Very directed.
> Mrs. Perez - And another one will end being more of a discussion. Another will be talking about something that happened in their recorded conference or in their journals that you want to talk to them about.
> Mrs. Shaw - And it's a good teaching time really too I've noticed.

During readers' workshop time, each teacher engaged in a conference with a group of students. The conferences were approximately 10-15 minutes in duration.

Further contextual information is provided by the following indepth analyses and discussions of the teachers' conferences. The teachers' and the students' interactions, as well as the relationships between the former and the latter have been examined in the following subsections.

Mrs. Shaw's Conferences

During the data collection period, the researcher audio-recorded Mrs. Shaw conducting 19 teacher conferences. Two conferences were not used for the data analyses as one tape was muffled and, inadvertently, the tape recorder was unplugged part way through another conference. Analyses of the conferences revealed that Mrs. Shaw's interactions could be classified into five general categories and the students' interactions (during the teacher conferences) could be coded into three general categories. Various subcategories constituted each general category for both the teacher (see Figure 5) and the student interactions (see Figure 6). For each conference, the researcher recorded the number of occurrences of each type of interaction (i.e. each subcategory).

Figure 5 - Mrs. Shaw's Interactions During Teacher Conferences

General Categories	Number of Conferences	Number of Occurrences
Tapped Students' Understandings and/or Knowledge of Texts		
1. asked questions about text or to find out more information about text (plot, setting, character) - retelling and summarizing	17	114
Extended Students' Understandings of Texts		
1. helped students articulate thoughts	17	35
2. asked students to explain their thoughts	12	26
3. asked for clarification of thinking	07	07
4. asked questions to extend student thinking	17	59
5. provided background information on something related to text	05	12
Facilitated Personal Engagement Responses		
1. asked students to make comparisons to other books, movies, people and/or life events	12	19
2. asked students to describe feelings of particular aspects	05	06
3. asked students to make predictions	07	08
4. encouraged students to empathize with characters or imagine self in characters' positions	02	02
5. asked for students' personal opinions of		
a) plot	09	14

b) characters	07	10
c) setting	06	07
d) author's technique or style	07	09
e) illustrator and/or illustrations (in text and cover)	00	00
f) book as a whole or central idea of text	09	15

Contributed Teacher Personal Responses

1. provided personal examples from own life	01	01
2. made comparisons to other books, movies, people and/or life events	06	09
3. articulated personal opinion	10	25

Addressed Instructional Aspects

1. made instructional comments or suggestions - components of readers' workshop	17	33
2. discussed some aspect of the reading process or a reading strategy	03	05
3. provided information about literature - structure and/or literary elements	07	14
4. provided feedback regarding conferences - positive aspects and areas for improvement	17	75

Teacher Interactions

While engaging in teacher conferences, Mrs. Shaw **tapped students' understandings and/or knowledge of texts**. In every conference, she asked literal questions about textual aspects (i.e. plot, setting and characters) and posed questions in order to ascertain additional information about texts.

> But what about the setting? Let's go back to that. I asked you where the setting was and what other parts of the setting are there. Just to say it's in a school. What all goes in with setting? What are parts of the setting in a novel? What other things besides just what you told me? Any ideas? When did the story take place? I don't mean the exact year but approximately.

> You're talking about the plot here but what's the point of this story. If you could say it in one sentence...I know you haven't completed it but what is

> the basic point here?
>
> What about the characters then? Is Megan the main character?...Why is it her island? Why do they call it Megan's Island?

A significant amount of the dialogue which occurred during Mrs. Shaw's conferences seemed to be aimed at **extending students' understandings of texts**, themselves and their world around them, the second general category in which the data was coded. In every conference Mrs. Shaw assisted the students in articulating their thinking and posed questions which required the children to extend their thinking of textually related aspects. Indeed, queries aimed at furthering students' thinking was the second most frequent type of question posed by Mrs. Shaw during her teacher conferences.

> Mrs. Shaw - So you probably think he's had a little more trouble, right?
> Student - Yeah, he doesn't have much confidence and stuff.
> Mrs. Shaw - So you're finding actually a personality in these owls then?
>
> Why do you think he's plotting? What makes you think that?...Is there anything in the book that you've read so far that gives you clues to that?
>
> But what do you think about a job where you go to work in the morning at 8 o'clock and I start screwing on lids and round 10 o'clock, 2 hours later, I can stop and take a 15 minute coffee break and then I go back and start screwing on these toothpaste lids again until noon?

In approximately three-quarters of the total number of conferences, Mrs. Shaw encouraged the children to explain their ideas or opinions.

> Student - I predict that one guy is the dad and the other is the partner and they're both trying to get Megan away from the mom so the dad can get Megan.
> Mrs. Shaw - Why do you think he would want Megan with him?
> Student - Like in the movies where guys just get out of jail and they want to see their kids so they try to kidnap them or something.
> Mrs. Shaw - So you think that it's either out of curiosity or some kind of love, right? Even though he's never seen her.

> Mrs. Shaw - Do you think that it's possible to have lots of stuff, nice cars and nice clothes and lots of money and still be a nice person?
> Students - Yeah.
> Mrs. Shaw - Why do you think that?

In approximately one-third of the conferences, Mrs. Shaw asked for clarification of students' thoughts and provided background information about textually related aspects.

> Student - One thing about him, he goes into such detail describing what people are doing and what they look like--they look queer. It sounds so funny like a crooked nose or sitting there wiggling his toes or something.
> Mrs. Shaw - Every little detail you mean he describes?
> Student - Yep.

> Do you think that would stimulate your mind very much day in and day out? But there are jobs like that where you do the same thing all the time, day after day--an assembly line job. Do you know what those are? Where you stand and do your little part. They've been changing these kinds of jobs in industry. We're learning that these kind of things are not producing good workers because they're boring and so they're trying to change them so that you change around and do different parts of the job instead of the same thing and trying to get things a little less monotonous.

Overall, there was an approximate equal number of interactions by Mrs. Shaw which both **tapped students' understandings and/or knowledge of texts** and **extended their understandings of texts**.

Facilitated personal engagement responses was the third general category in which the conference conversations were categorized. In approximately three-quarters of the conferences, Mrs. Shaw asked for the students' personal opinions of literary textual elements (i.e. plot, characters and setting). Indeed, this was the third most frequent type of question which occurred during the conferences. As well, asking for students' opinions of textual aspects accounted for approximately one-half of the number of interactions coded in the **facilitated personal engagement responses** category.

> But what do you think about what you just said to me? That this guy is trying to get her off the team because he's trying to get on it so he's trying to do things to her and the brothers want her on the team because otherwise, etc.--what do you think of all this?

Mrs. Shaw encouraged the students to make comparisons of textual aspects to other books, people, movies, and/or life events in approximately three-quarters of her teacher conferences.

> Mrs. Shaw - Have you guys ever read James and the Giant Peach?
> Students - Yes.
> Mrs. Shaw - What did you think of that one compared to this one?
> Student - Roald Dahl is an excellent author. You get everything that happened. It's amazing.
> Mrs. Shaw - Yes, it's an excellent book. Do you find anything similar in the language?

In one-half of the conferences, Mrs. Shaw asked for the children's opinions of the overall text or the central idea of the book. Together, asking for students' personal opinions of books (as a whole) or of the central idea of texts, and of illustrators and/or illustrations constituted approximately one-quarter of the total number of remarks coded in the third category.

> O.K., so what do you think about this book?
>
> What type of story is this do you think? Is it just plain comedy or are you expected to learn something from it?

Mrs. Shaw asked the children to describe their feelings towards particular aspects of the books, encouraged the students to articulate predictions of future events, and posed questions about the writing techniques or styles of authors in approximately one-third of the conferences.

> What about some feelings--about things you do not understand or how you felt when something happened or did you identify with any of the

> characters?
>
> What about a prediction here? What do you think is going to happen? Do you think he'll make the radio contact? Do you think he's going to crash land? Or do you think he's going to bail out?
>
> What about the kind of language Roald Dahl uses in his book?...Is it different than stories you've read or is it similar to other stories you've read?...Do you find that some of his expressions or phrases are slightly different?...he uses what almost would be considered insulting words, very insulting to people by an author but he gets away with it because it's his style. And people read it and they know that that is Roald Dahl and that's his way of being humorous and funny. Because they know he's not being serious--like he's poking fun at things.

In two conferences, she encouraged the children to empathize with characters in the novels.

> Have you guys ever been in any kind of race before of any kind? Maybe not a horse race but any kind?....Can you remember the feeling you had starting the race and the feelings you had trying to get to the end? Do you think you can kind of relate to what she's feeling?

During the conferences, Mrs. Shaw articulated personal responses. However, overall, the number of occurrences of **contributed teacher personal responses** was very small compared to the other three categories described previously. Mrs. Shaw articulated her personal opinions of textually relevant aspects in over one-half of the conferences.

> She says she jumps out in front of the boy of her dreams and says, "Hi, I'm your new girlfriend." (Reads from the back of book.) Would you ever do that? (Girls giggle and say, "No.") Well, I don't think I would either so there's an idea.

In approximately one-third of the conferences, Mrs. Shaw compared some facet of the piece of literature being discussed to another book, movie, people and/or life events.

> Does this book remind you of anything? I'm just curious. Definitely

> something comes to my mind. I don't know if you guys have seen it--it's an old movie. Have you ever seen the movie "Pete's Dragon"?...It's about a boy and his imaginary dragon and other people do see him. And what I'm finding interesting about this book and I'm wondering if it's similar to this book is that in the end the dragon goes because he says you don't need me anymore. He's kind of there as a security thing for him awhile.

The other main theme which emerged from the analyses of the conference data was the occurrence of teacher talk which **addressed instructional aspects**. In every conference Mrs. Shaw verbalized instructional comments or suggestions related to various components of readers' workshop.

> ...When you're writing in your response journals just make sure that you always give your reasons and that comes with anything. Anytime you give an opinion or a statement, you've always got to have reasons for it. Somebody might challenge you and say, "Well, why?" Not just when you're responding to literature but anything so just get in the habit of saying why you think that....

As well, at the conclusion of every conference, Mrs. Shaw provided the students substantial feedback regarding both the positive aspects and areas requiring improvement of their conferences. Her comments appeared to reinforce those conference behaviours she deemed 'desirable'. The ample feedback communicated by Mrs. Shaw consumed very little of the conference time. Her positive remarks addressed the quality of the students' comments, the hitchhiking which occurred during the conferences, the use of different responses from the mind map, and the equality of contributions from group members.

> ...You guys are very very good at hitchhiking and clarifying ideas. Somebody will say something and you pick up on it (snaps fingers) and say, "Well I'm not quite sure if I saw it this way" and you discuss it and that's the best way to really get meaning out of the book--to get your

> different views and different ideas in there and you're good at that and sometimes somebody has an idea and somebody else will elaborate on it and so I'm real pleased with how well this group has been doing that. And you always stay on topic very well. You're always prepared--everybody is always caught up so that part is really good too and you're starting to make some really good quality responses. You're not just telling me what's happening. You're giving me your feelings and you're expressing what you think about the book and what it does to you....

In suggesting areas for improvement, Mrs. Shaw reminded the children to provide explanations or reasons for their thoughts or opinions, to respond to one another, to ensure members were contributing equally to the conference, and to develop their ideas or deepen the level of their discussions.

> ...What I'm still missing a little bit are some of your reasons. I'm still not getting enough of why you think what you do. So really that's what I really want you to work on. I think you guys need to make sure that Student X and Student Y get equal opportunity to talk. I don't want you two to be quieter but maybe just draw them out a little more. And when they do say something, really listen. And don't come in until they're all done. O.K.?
>
> ...The part you still might work on a little bit and even this you're doing well--you are working at explaining what you say. But you notice that there were a few times I asked what made you think that and I drew it out a little bit more. When you make a comment really tell people why you think that. Back it up. And explain it--what made me think that. What clues did I get from the story that led me to believe that?...So you see you have to make statements that fit and explain why you think that. Where did you get that? What clues made you feel that way? And you are doing well but I want you to go a little further if you can....

Once the teachers had suggested that the students record their thoughts or ideas in the back of their journals while reading, Mrs. Shaw also reminded the students of this practice in her conferences.

In approximately one-third of the conferences, she provided the children with information about structural or literary elements of literature.

> ...That usually occurs near the end of the book and it's called the climax

> of the story. When all of the little hurdles that she had, and I say little but that doesn't mean they're not important. It means they're not quite as big as this main one at the end.

In three conferences, Mrs. Shaw discussed some aspect of the reading process or a reading strategy with the children.

> But sometimes there is not always a right and a wrong answer to some of these things. Some details maybe you'll have to go back and clarify but sometimes it is the way that you interpret it and it's perfectly O.K. to interpret it differently.

Overall, the most frequent type of 'talk' engaged in by Mrs. Shaw during her teacher conferences was posing questions to the students. She was actively involved in all of the teacher conferences recorded by the researcher. The students seemed to direct the discussions in about one-half of the conferences. In approximately one-quarter of the conferences, it appeared that both Mrs. Shaw and the students took equal roles in leading the conversations. Mrs. Shaw took a more active role in directing and orchestrating the conversations of approximately one-quarter of the conferences. It appeared that the membership of the groups affected the degree to which she directed the conferences as some students were more able to facilitate their own discussions. It seemed that Mrs. Shaw was sensitive to the conferencing capabilities of the different groups and varied both the quantity and quality of her participation accordingly. In addition, in nine conferences, on at least one occasion, she drew reticent students into the conversations by posing questions to them directly or asking for their opinions of textually related aspects.

Student Interactions

The researcher also examined the types and number of student interactions which occurred during Mrs. Shaw's teacher conferences. The data were coded into three general categories, each composed of various subcategories (see Figure 6). Examples of the students' comments have not been provided in this part of the data analysis as the same categorization scheme was employed to analyze the students' independent and recorded conferences and those sections of the dissertation contain numerous excerpts from the transcripts.

Figure 6 - Student Interactions During Mrs. Shaw's Teacher Conferences

General Categories	Number of Conferences	Number of Occurrences
Tapped Understandings and/or Knowledge of Texts		
1. talked about plot (retelling and summarizing)	17	139
2. talked about characters	17	79
3. talked about setting	10	31
Extended Understanding of Texts		
1. provided explanations for or examples to support ideas	14	66
2. talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion	17	99
3. talk about what they did not understand	05	07
4. made "I wonder" statements	06	08
5. hypothesized possible reasons or explanations for "I wonder" statements	00	00
Personal Engagement Responses		
1. compared novels to other books, movies, people and/or life events	10	19
2. made predictions	12	30
3. described feelings about some textual aspect	03	08
4. empathized with characters or imagined self in	06	08

characters' positions		
5. visualized some aspect of text	00	00
6. provided personal opinion		
a) plot	13	46
b) characters	15	49
c) setting	08	21
d) author's technique or style	09	20
e) illustrator and/or illustrations (in text and/or cover)	04	05
f) book as a whole or central idea of text	14	31

Over one-third of the total student interactions which occurred during Mrs. Shaw's teacher conferences were coded in the first general category of **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts**. In all of the conferences the children conversed about the plots and the characters of the books. They talked about the settings of the novels in approximately one-half of the total number of conferences but interactions about setting accounted for only one-eighth of the overall number of remarks coded in the first general category. Thus it was evident that substantial content of the children's conference conversations addressed the textual elements of plot and character at the literal level of comprehension.

Interactions in the second general category, **extended students understandings of texts**, accounted for approximately one-quarter of the total number of student remarks coded during Mrs. Shaw's conferences. Nearly all of the interactions of the second category were coded in the first two subcategories. Talking to clarify or to further understandings and/or discussion accounted for about one-half of the total number remarks coded in the **extended students' understandings of texts** category. Providing explanations for or examples to support ideas constituted approximately one-third of the total number of interactions in the second category.

Over one-third of the total number of student interactions which occurred during Mrs. Shaw's conferences were classified in the **personal engagement responses** category. The articulation of student personal opinion accounted for nearly three-quarters of the remarks coded in the third general category. Approximately two-thirds of the personal opinion subcategory was constituted by the students' expressing opinions of textual aspects of plot, setting and characters. Of the latter, opinions about the settings of books accounted for only one-fifth of the interactions. There was an approximate equal number of interactions coded as **personal engagement responses** and **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts**.

Approximately three-quarters of the total number of coded student remarks which occurred during Mrs. Shaw's teacher conferences were constituted by the following subcategories: talking about plot and characters; providing explanations for or examples to support ideas; talking to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion; and providing personal opinion of plot, setting and characters.

Discussion of the Relationship of Teacher and Student Interactions

As Mrs. Shaw asked many questions which **tapped students' understandings and/or knowledge of texts**, it was not surprising that over a third of the total student interactions which occurred during the conferences were also coded in this general category. Less than one-quarter of Mrs. Shaw's total remarks were classified in **tapped students' understandings and/or knowledge of texts**, whereas, over one-third of the children's total interactions were coded in this first general category. Therefore, it appeared that in some conferences, the children conversed about literal aspects of the novels of their own volition.

Mrs. Shaw also posed many questions to extend the children's thinking (i.e. **extended students' understandings of texts**). The latter may account for the large number of remarks classified as talk to clarify or further understandings and/or discussions. As well, Mrs. Shaw took a less active role in leading some of the conferences and therefore the children were more involved in conversing about the books.

Approximately one-third of the total number of interactions in the second general category were coded as the students providing explanations for or examples to support their ideas. Again this pattern may be explained by the number of occurrences where Mrs. Shaw both encouraged the children to extend their thinking and asked the students to explain their thoughts.

Personal engagement responses accounted for approximately one-third of the children's total coded interactions. As **facilitated personal engagement responses** accounted for about one-sixth of Mrs. Shaw's overall remarks, it seemed that in some conferences, the children expressed their opinions of their own volition.

Mrs. Perez's Conferences

The researcher audio-recorded Mrs. Perez conducting 16 teacher conferences during the data collection period. Analyses of the conferences revealed that the teacher interactions could be classified into five general categories and the students' interactions (during the teacher conferences) could be coded into three general categories. Various subcategories constituted each general category for both the teacher (see Figure 7) and the student interactions (see Figure 8). The researcher recorded the number of each subcategory (i.e. each type of interaction) which occurred during the conferences.

Figure 7 - Mrs. Perez's Interactions During Teacher Conferences

	Number of Conferences	Number of Occurrences
General Categories		
Tapped Students' Understandings and/or Knowledge of Texts		
1. asked questions about text or to find out more information about text (plot, setting, character) - retelling and summarizing	16	307
Extended Students' Understandings of Texts		
1. helped students articulate thoughts	14	39
2. asked students to explain their thoughts	12	31
3. asked for clarification of thinking	06	09
4. asked questions to extend student thinking	16	93
5. provided background information on something related to text	13	64
Facilitated Personal Engagement Responses		
1. asked students to make comparisons to other books, movies, people and/or life events	10	21
2. asked students to describe feelings of particular aspects	04	07
3. asked students to make predictions	06	13
4. encouraged students to empathize with characters or imagine self in characters' positions	03	08
5. asked for students' personal opinions of		
a) plot	06	10
b) characters	07	13
c) setting	01	02

d) author's technique or style	08	16
e) illustrator and/ or illustrations (in text and cover)	03	11
f) book as a whole or central idea of text	09	16
Contributed Teacher Personal Responses		
1. provided personal examples from own life	07	12
2. made comparisons to other books, movies, people and/or life events	07	11
3. articulated personal opinion	11	48
Addressed Instructional Aspects		
1. made instructional comments or suggestions - components of readers' workshop	05	13
2. discussed some aspect of the reading process or a reading strategy	01	01
3. provided information about literature - structure and/or literary elements	05	07
4. provided feedback regarding conferences - positive aspects and areas for improvement	02	02

Teacher Interactions

While engaging in teacher conferences, Mrs. Perez **tapped students' understandings and/or knowledge of texts**. In every conference, she asked literal questions about textual elements (i.e. plot, setting and characters) and posed questions in order to ascertain additional information about the novels. Overwhelmingly, questions intended to discover further information about texts (at the literal level of comprehension) were the most common type of teacher interaction and overall, teacher questioning of this nature accounted for nearly one-half of the total interactions during Mrs. Perez's conferences.

> Are you getting a feeling for Natty Gan's character? Now that you're almost through the book? If you had to describe Natty Gan to someone what would you say? Say, I got this friend and her name is Natty Gan--can you describe her? Tell me about your friend Natty Gan.

> Right, so what's the conflict in this story then?
>
> So how is this camp set up? Where do they stay? Do they bring their own tents?...Why did Bugs Potter's dad choose such an isolated location for their trip?

Approximately one-third of the total interactions were coded in the second category of **extended students' understandings of texts,** themselves and their world around them. Mrs. Perez asked questions which required the children to extend their thinking of textually related aspects in every conference. Indeed, queries aimed at furthering students' thinking constituted about two-fifths of the total number of interactions coded in the second category.

> Do you think that the author is intending to show any growth in Murphy? Is he going to change? Is he going to learn anything? Does he have anything to learn?
>
> So are you saying that if you don't think in your mind that you can do something then you won't actually be able to do it with your body? Do you think there's a connection there?

In over three-quarters of the conferences, Mrs. Perez assisted students in articulating their thoughts and asked the children to explain their ideas or opinions. Together, these two subcategories accounted for nearly one-third of the total remarks classified in the **extended students' understanding of texts** category.

> Student - And this one all he's doing is hiding a tape deck in his backpack with candy bars.
> Mrs. Perez - So you think that in this book the situations that are created for the characters aren't quite as interesting?
>
> In your opinion do you think it's wrong to wear 'in' clothes and have other people like you?...Do you think it's wrong? Why?

In over three-quarters of the teacher conferences Mrs. Perez provided background information on textually related aspects. The latter type of interaction constituted approximately one-quarter of the total number of interactions in the second general category.

> ...Often times during the second World War when Hitler moved into France and Poland and those countries--well in France there was a movement called the Resistance and those people went underground. They were secret. They met in secret and sent messages in secret. They identified each other by secret code names. That sort of thing.

In her teacher conferences, Mrs. Perez **facilitated student personal engagement responses**. Over one-half of the remarks coded in this third general category involved Mrs. Perez asking the children for their personal opinions of textually related aspects. In over three-quarters of the conferences, Mrs. Perez asked for the children's opinions of the plot, setting and characters of the books. Indeed, students' personal opinions of aspects of plot and character accounted for almost one-half of the total number of categorized personal opinions.

> So do you know Mrs. Richardson at all? Is there any real character to her or did the author just tell what happened or do you feel like you know this teacher?
>
> Why do you think they weren't that thorough in their searching?
>
> What do you think about that? How about the people who didn't whip their slaves? How about people who treated them well?

In over one-half of the conferences Mrs. Perez encouraged the children to make comparisons of textual aspects to other books, movies, people and/or life events.

> Like compare it to say, Harriet the Spy. Was Harriet the Spy a harder book to read?

Mrs. Perez asked the children to describe their feelings of particular textual elements, and encouraged the students to articulate predictions of future textual events in approximately one-quarter of the conferences.

> Mrs. Perez - What kinds of feelings did you have as you read this story?
> Student - Lots of suspense.
> Mrs. Perez - Suspense. O.K. Give me some others. Like what kind of emotions came up inside of you as you read about the people and their situations?
>
> Any predictions about Bugs's dad? What do you think is going to happen?

Together, teacher queries about the students' opinions of an author's style or technique, the illustrations and/or illustrators, and the book as a whole or the central idea of the text, accounted for nearly two-thirds of the total coded personal opinion remarks.

> So if you could talk to the author and tell him these things what suggestions would you make for improvement?
>
> What do you think about the cover on the book? Do you think they did a good job whoever designed the cover of the book?
>
> How do you like the book?

In approximately one-quarter of the teacher conferences, Mrs. Perez encouraged the students to empathize with characters or imagine themselves in characters' positions.

> What do you think she might do? Put yourself in Lissa's place. You've always been fairly well liked--you've always been maybe not the most popular person in the class but fairly well liked and now this new kid comes along and she starts getting the campaign going to put you down. What are you going to do?

There were very few occurrences of **contributed teacher personal responses** during Mrs. Perez's conferences. In over two-thirds of the conferences, she articulated her personal opinions of aspects relevant to the novels being discussed. As well, nearly two-thirds of the total interactions coded in the fourth general category were teacher-provided personal opinion.

> ...Puffin, in my mind anyway, is a publishing house that if I see this little sign, I'll check out the book because they tend to publish good books. So if I first even see this sign, then I'll take a second look at the book....
>
> I think one of my favourite things about Roald Dahl are the words that he thinks up to call people. It's absolutely hilarious.

In nearly one-half of the conferences, Mrs. Perez related a personal example from her own life to the text being discussed and compared textual aspects to other books, movies, people and/or life events.

> So that was the way his seizure worked. And they can be different. My sister first of all just had what they call *petit mal* --just little things were if you weren't looking at her, you wouldn't notice but her eyes would go up and she would be unconscious but it would be like just 30 seconds and while you were talking to her you would be like, "Hello! Anybody there?" And really, she had lost consciousness for a short period of time....
>
> Have you seen the Anne of Green Gables movie?...I read the book when I was about your age, when I was 10 and I just loved it and of course they didn't have the movie then...And I've seen the movie since and that's one of the few things where I say that the movie was perfect...and that's because the character who played Anne of Green Gables was perfect....

The fifth main category in which Mrs. Perez's talk was categorized was **addressed instructional aspects**. The number of interactions coded in this category were very small in comparison to the other four categories. In about one-quarter of the conferences, Mrs. Perez verbalized instructional comments or suggestions related to various components of readers' workshop, and provided information about literature (structural and/or literary elements).

> Where are your questions?...I suggest you start at the back, use your last page and every time you have a new book, put the title of your book and

> then put your questions there so that you can keep a record of it.
>
> Often in stories when there are two main characters they'll have different personalities and it just makes the story more interesting.

Asking questions was the most recurring type of 'talk' engaged in by Mrs. Perez during her conferences. She was dominant in directing the conversations in all of the teacher conferences recorded by the researcher. Of the conferences audio-recorded, there seemed to be no examples of conferences where the students controlled or led the conversations. In over one-half of the conferences, Mrs. Perez asked questions or opinions of students who were not actively involved in the conversations.

Student Interactions

The researcher also examined the types and number of student interactions which occurred during Mrs. Perez's teacher conferences. The data were coded into three general categories, each composed of various subcategories (see Figure 8). Examples of the students' comments have not been provided as the same categorization scheme was employed to analyze the students' independent and recorded conferences and those sections of the dissertation contain numerous excerpts from the research transcripts.

Figure 8 - Student Interactions During Mrs. Perez's Teacher Conferences

General Categories	Number of Conferences	Number of Occurrences
Tapped Understandings and/or Knowledge of Texts		
1. talked about plot (retelling and/or summarizing)	16	183

2. talked about characters	16	142
3. talked about setting	05	11
Extended Understandings of Text		
1. provided explanations for or examples to support ideas	15	49
2. talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion	10	46
3. talk about what they did not understand	01	02
4. made "I wonder" statements	04	14
5. hypothesized possible reasons or explanations for "I wonder" statements	02	02
Personal Engagement Responses		
1. compared novels to other books, movies, people and/or life events	14	39
2. made predictions	07	20
3. described feelings about some textual aspect	03	04
4. empathized with characters or imagined self in characters' positions	03	08
5. visualized some aspect of text	01	02
6. provided personal opinion		
a) plot	06	21
b) characters	11	37
c) setting	03	05
d) author's technique or style	05	16
e) illustrator and/or illustrations (in text and/or cover)	06	13
f) book as a whole or central idea of text	12	32

In all of Mrs. Perez's conferences the students talked about the plots and the characters of the books. Analysis of the data revealed that substantial content of the children's conference conversations addressed the elements of plot and character (at the literal level of comprehension). Indeed, one-half of the total student interactions which occurred during Mrs. Perez's teacher conferences were coded in the first general category of **tapped**

understandings and/or knowledge of texts as talk about plot and characters. Although the children talked about the settings of texts in approximately one-third of the total number of conferences, the overall number of remarks coded as talk about setting were inconsequential (11 remarks).

Nearly all of the interactions of the second category, **extended understandings of texts**, were coded in the first two subcategories, provided explanations for or examples to support ideas, and talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion. Interactions in the second general category accounted for approximately one-fifth of the total number of student interactions which occurred during Mrs. Perez's conferences.

Over one-quarter of the total number of student interactions which occurred during the teacher conferences were classified in the **personal engagement responses** category. The articulation of student personal opinion accounted for approximately two-thirds of the remarks coded in the third general category. Of the personal opinion subcategory, nearly one-half was constituted by the expression of opinions of textual aspects addressing the literary elements of plot and characters. Comparing novels to other books, movies, people and/or life events, and making predictions accounted for slightly less than one-third of the total number of interactions in the **personal engagement responses** category.

Although interactions coded in the second and third general categories accounted for approximately one-half of the overall remarks, there were differences in the number of student interactions in each category. Interactions coded as **extended understandings of texts** constituted less than one-fifth of the total number of coded remarks and **personal engagement**

responses made up over one-quarter of the total number of interactions. Interestingly, there was an approximate equal number of student remarks coded as talk about plot as there were for the entire general category of **personal engagement responses**.

Discussion of the Relationship of Teacher and Student Interactions

As nearly one-half of Mrs. Perez's interactions were coded in the category of **tapped students' understandings and/or knowledge of texts**, it was not surprising that over one-half of the total student interactions were also classified in the first general category.

Approximately one-third of Mrs. Perez's total interactions were classified in the second general category of **extended students' understandings of texts**. Approximately one-half of the second general category's remarks were constituted by the two subcategories of asking students to explain their thoughts, and posing questions to extend students' thinking. The latter may account for the pattern that nearly all of the children's interactions in the second category (**extended understandings of texts**) were coded in the first two subcategories of provided explanations for or examples to support ideas, and talked to clarify or to further understandings and/or discussions.

Of the interactions in which Mrs. Perez asked for the students' opinions of textual elements, one-third of her queries addressed plot and character aspects. The expression of personal opinions of plot and characters constituted one-half of the students' remarks in the personal opinion subcategory. Overall, **personal engagement responses** constituted over one-quarter of the students' total remarks and approximately one-eighth of Mrs. Perez's total remarks. Thus it appeared that the children were contributing some **personal**

engagement responses without teacher prompting.

For both Mrs. Perez and the children, over two-thirds of their total interactions were coded in the two general categories of **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts** and **extended understandings of texts**.

Discussion of the Teachers' Conferences

The teachers believed that they were to be participants in their conferences with the children. As well, they explained how the teacher conferences provided them with opportunities to model 'how to' conference. Both teachers expressed their personal opinions of textually related events and made comparisons to other books, movies and/or life events in their conferences. Thus they appeared to be demonstrating the legitimacy of articulating personal responses. (Although compared to the first two general categories, both teachers' personal responses were very small.) The substantial number of questions of an 'efferent' nature posed by the teachers seemed to contradict the teachers' desire for the children to articulate personal responses that reflected their lived-through experiences of texts. As well, the questioning seemed to detract from the establishment of a 'flow' to the conference; a characteristic the teachers described as imperative to the success of conferences. Perhaps the fact that the teachers had not read all of the books the children were reading might explain their many inquiries about the texts. To the researcher, it appeared that the teachers were asking questions to genuinely ascertain information about the books and not to 'test' the children's comprehension.

In one of the interviews with the teachers, Mrs. Perez discussed her beliefs about the teacher's role in tapping and extending students' understandings of texts and themselves.

> Mrs. Perez - I think one of the most effective teaching tools is the ability to ask the right questions. And this program gives the teacher an opportunity to dialogue with children and ask those types of questions. When children are asked questions it forces them to search inside their minds and examine what they've read and examine what they've learned and to come up with a response. So the question that elicits the response is 'the teaching', I think.

The latter quote may also assist in explaining the large number of questions posed by the teachers during their conferences.

The teachers also stated that they viewed the teacher conferences as 'teaching' opportunities. The teachers had explained how they believed asking questions was an important teaching tool. Thus they may have perceived their ample number of queries as occurrences of instruction (i.e. "a one-on-one lesson" or "a mini-lesson"). In addition, both teachers articulated instructional comments regarding various components of readers' workshop during the conferences. Further, the teachers provided the children with information about structural and/or literary elements of literature during their conferences.

It appeared that the teachers were engaging in both efferent and aesthetic teaching (Zarrillo & Cox, 1992) during their conferences. Zarrillo and Cox (1992) developed a taxonomy of literature instruction based on their observations of and interviews with 27 elementary teachers. The two main categories, efferent and aesthetic teaching, were composed of several descriptive subcategories. Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez seemed to engage in four of Zarrillo's and Cox's eight subcategories of efferent teaching. The subcategory of "text content" involved the teachers directing the children's attention to a set of textual facts and posing interpretive and evaluative questions where "the answers could be verified by returning to the text" (p. 239). "Analysis of text" was the second efferent teaching subcategory the teachers' conference dialogues appeared to fit in as they used traditional literary terms such as plot, character, setting and style in their questions and conversations. The third subcategory, "disassembling the text" involved the teachers isolating and discussing specific plot elements or composition patterns of the texts. The large number of questions the teachers posed about the texts demonstrated the latter three subcategories of efferent teaching. Finally the teachers used the novels as mediums for generating something else (i.e. book shares and celebrations). The books were viewed as objects "that students could refer to when producing a written, dramatic, or artistic product" (p. 241).

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez also engaged in aesthetic teaching where "students were encouraged to shape individual responses" to texts (p. 242). In varying degrees, the teachers' activities covered all five subcategories of aesthetic teaching identified by Zarrillo and Cox. With regards to the first category, choice of books, reading situations, or response type, Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw provided the children opportunities to self-select books. In the teacher conferences, the children and teachers selectively attended to particular text parts and talked about parts they liked or disliked and provided their opinions of textual events. To some extent the teachers engaged in the third subcategory of aesthetic teaching, imaging and picturing, which involved encouraging the children "to put themselves in a character's place, imagine themselves in the story, or picture images in the story" (p. 243). The teachers provided the students opportunities to relate their associations and feelings (the fourth subcategory) as they encouraged the children to "establish links between the text and personal experiences" and to make intertextual connections (p. 244) (i.e. make comparisons and articulate personal opinions). Finally, the teachers provided the children opportunities to hypothesize about particular text events and character actions and "extend the story beyond the text" (p. 244) (i.e. make predictions).

As well, the teacher conference data seemed to indicate that Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw were assisting the children in thinking about and talking about the literature they were reading. In several instances the teachers seemed to scaffold the students' thinking. They helped the students focus their conversations by requesting clarification or further explanation. As well, Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw assisted the children in shaping their ideas by helping them articulate their thoughts or ideas. In some instances the teachers encouraged the students to use information from the novels or the ensuing conversations to develop interpretations or gain new understandings (Langer, 1992a). As well, the teachers "upped the ante" and helped the children think about textually related issues in new or different ways (Langer, 1992a). The latter two scaffolding activities were illustrated by the teachers asking questions to extend the students' thinking and providing background information on textually related aspects, as well as all of the subcategories of the category **facilitated personal engagement responses**.

Both teachers discussed the importance of engaging in indepth discussions of literature and encouraged the children to deepen or extend their thinking or understandings of textually relevant aspects. It seemed that the teachers wanted the children to develop more indepth conversations and to deepen their understandings of textual issues.

> Mrs. S - ...But by taking something somebody says and developing it and talking about it further and not kill it, but talk about it a bit until somebody says something else new but that shows you're listening to each other and you're developing your ideas and you're getting down to better meaning. Now you could even do that a little more. Like take an idea that somebody gives out and develop it fully. You can dig a little deeper and get more understanding of the meanings of stories.

However, in the teacher conferences (as well as in the independent and recorded conferences), there was very little evidence of individuals participating in discussions which "engaged each student in an extended exploration of his or her own ideas, developing those ideas" (Applebee, 1992, p. 13). Possibly the teachers were unsure how to facilitate and model the latter types of discussions. As well, perhaps the children were uncertain of what they needed to do to "take an idea and develop it." Moffett (1973) discussed the process of "expatiation" stating that "the heart of discussion is expatiation, picking up ideas and developing them; corroborating, qualifying, and challenging; building on and varying each other's statements, and images. Questioning is a very important part, but only a part, and should arise out of exchanges among students themselves so that they learn to pose as well as answer questions" (p. 46). It appeared that both the students and the teachers needed to engage in "expatiation" in order to actual 'discuss' the literature.

The discussions of the relationships of the teachers' and students' interactions seemed to indicate that the teachers' behaviours affected the conversations which occurred during the teacher conferences. Other research which has investigated elementary students' literature discussions has also found that teacher conduct significantly affected conference content and student behaviour. A study by Eeds and Wells (1989) investigated literature discussions of 5th and 6th grade students and preservice teachers. The children were grouped heterogeneously according to their reading abilities. The students selected novels to read and met twice a week with practicum students to discuss the texts. The researchers emphasized to the student teachers to let the meanings emerge during the group discussions. The researchers found that the teachers' behaviours affected the types of interactions which occurred during the conferences. In some groups there was genuine dialogue whereas in other groups, it seemed that a "gentle inquisition" occurred as the teacher asked many questions about the reading. The researchers believed that literature discussions should and could go beyond "a simple reading level" to deeper meaning when participants engaged in dialogue (pp. 5-6). "In dialogue, the literature study group (teacher and students working together) constructs and discloses deeper meanings, enriching understanding for all participants" (p. 5). Eeds and Wells (1989) maintained that "grand conversations about literature" (p. 28) may be possible when teachers were fellow participants in discussion groups, sharing their own personal transactions with text and acknowledged that their ideas, interpretations and opinions were possibilities, not definitive answers.

A study by Villaume and Worden (1993) examined the literature discussions of grade four students. The researchers and teachers found it necessary to model, facilitate and teach the types of talk they expected in the conferences. They demonstrated both initial personal responses and "how to respond to the personal responses of students" by elaborating, probing and offering "alternative ways of thinking about their responses" (p. 465). In discussions, researchers' and teachers' questions and comments provided "a scaffold for response development" (p. 466). Ideally, "these verbal scaffolds [would] become internalized so that the students [would] begin to elaborate, probe and challenge their personal responses independently" (p. 463). Further, direct instruction where the teachers talked about 'talk' occurred. Mini-lessons were used to draw the children's attention to particular aspects of literature discussions (e.g. staying on topic, being respectful, discussing and refining responses). The researchers and teachers in this study discovered that it was necessary for them to be active participants in the literature discussions, demonstrating "the varied roles of participants: accepting, facilitating, elaborating, and probing" (p. 467).

The research conducted by Eeds and Wells (1989) and Villaume and Worden (1993) demonstrated the importance of teachers modeling desired conference behaviours. "The ways students engage in literature discussions with adults and peers set the foundation for the way students think about literature as they read independently" (Villaume & Worden, 1993, p. 463).

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw also discussed the importance of modeling conferencing behaviours but it appeared that the abundance of questions asked during the teacher conferences seemed to inhibit genuine dialogue. The teachers explained how they had initially modeled and introduced conference 'talk' and behaviours. As there were very few examples of 'extended discussions' about the literature, perhaps the teachers needed to provide additional direct instruction and model desirable types of conference talk and behaviours (e.g. share more of their personal transactions with texts). As well, it seemed that the teachers needed to monitor and reflect upon their conference behaviours in order to assess the types of conference interactions they were engaging in, modeling and facilitating.

The research by Eeds and Wells (1989), and Villaume and Worden (1993), as well as the current study demonstrate the complexity of introducing, facilitating and extending literature discussions with elementary students. As well, all three studies, illustrate the salient role of the teacher. Teachers need to assume the role of 'fellow reader'; to communicate their lived-through experiences of texts. The "quality of students' response - their willingness to explore and extend their response - depends heavily on teachers' own willingness to themselves engage in thoughtful, engrossing conversations" (Beach, 1993, p. 118).

As well as teacher conferences, the children participated in recorded and independent conferences. The following two sections provide an indepth analyses of these two types of conferences.

Recorded Conferences

The researcher examined 23 student recorded conferences (i.e. the children audio-recorded their conferences). When analyzing the data, the researcher excluded five of the examples as two were prereading conferences and three were postreading conferences. The guidelines for middle conferences differed significantly from those for prereading and postreading conferences and consequently the contents of the latter two types of conferences were affected by the required procedures.

Analyses of the conferences revealed that the discussions could be categorized into three general categories with various subcategories constituting each general category (see Figure 9). The researcher recorded the number of each type of interaction which occurred during the conferences.

Figure 9 - Student Interactions During Recorded Conferences

General Categories	Number of Conferences	Number of Occurrences
Tapped Understandings and/or Knowledge of Texts		
1. talked about plot (retelling and/or summarizing)	16	55
2. talked about characters	15	34
3. talked about setting	01	01
Extended Understandings of Texts		
1. provided explanations for or examples to support ideas	17	97
2. talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion	16	167
3. talk about what they did not understand	09	12
4. made "I wonder" statements	17	65
5. hypothesized possible reasons or explanations for "I wonder" statements	16	35
Personal Engagement Responses		
1. compared novels to other books, movies, people and/or life events	16	35
2. made predictions	10	35
3. described feelings about some textual aspect	05	06
4. empathized with characters or imagined self in characters' positions	12	30
5. visualized some aspect of text	03	10
6. provided personal opinion		
a) plot	16	60
b) characters	16	69
c) setting	06	08
d) author's technique or style	15	48
e) illustrator and/or illustrations (in text and/or cover)	09	22
f) book as a whole or central idea of text	16	41

The first general category in which the recorded conference interactions were coded was **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts**. In all but two recorded conferences, the children talked about the plots of the books. In approximately three-quarters of the student conferences there were conversations about the characters of the books.

> Student 1 - Poor Mr. Fox--they tried to dig him out but that didn't work so they took caterpillars and tractors and tried to dig him out.
> Student 2 - They're having a race--the fox and farmers.
> Student 3 - Mr. Fox goes and steals their food and that's why they want to get him.
>
> Student 1 - I think the main characters are Murphy and Ashley.
> Student 2 - I think so too. It doesn't tell anything about the mom.
> Student 1 - It doesn't tell what she does, what she looks like and it only tells she is a teacher.

The second general category in which the conference data was categorized was **extended understandings of texts**. In over three-quarters of the recorded conferences the students provided explanations for or examples to support their ideas; talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion; articulated "I wonder" statements; and hypothesized possible reasons or explanations for their "I wonder" statements.

> Student - I think he feels sorry for Charlie because the other ones are spoiled and Charlie isn't. Charlie is poor and they don't even have a T.V.
>
> Student 1 - I don't know why he has to do the play--just to get extra marks.
> Student 2 - Because he'll fail English.
> Student 3 - I thought they said he's a brain.
> Student 2 - He is but he doesn't like English and it's like he's always late and the teacher doesn't like him so he's doing it for extra credit
>
> Student 1 - I wonder why it is called Underground to Canada because they probably won't be going underground. They're probably going up on the ground.

Student 2 - Maybe they have to go underground to escape.
Student 3 - Or to go underground to take a railway.

The children talked about parts of the novels they were experiencing difficulties in understanding in approximately one-half of the recorded conferences.

Student 2 - But there are black people in Canada.
Student 1 - Maybe the guy was just really nice to him instead of--he didn't say he had to be a slave.
Student 3 - Maybe he was a guy who worked for a company or something.
Student 1 - Like he's free but he still has to work for him but he doesn't get whipped.
Student 2 - I don't understand that part--maybe it will tell us more later.

The third general category in which the conference dialogues were categorized was **personal engagement responses**. In over three-quarters of the recorded conferences the students expressed their personal opinions of the plot, the characters, the author's technique or style, and the book as a whole or the central idea of the text.

Student 1 - I liked it where Debrah wore that Valentine's dress.
Student 2 - Yeah, that was funny.
Student 1 - I think Lissa's a lonely girl.
All - Yeah.
Student 2 - I think she's been lonely since grade 1 or 2.

Student 1 - I think that Roald Dahl has a good imagination.
Student 2 - Yeah and to think up stories like this would probably be hard.
Student 3 - And all of Mr. Willy Wonka's inventions--like how would he think of "square candies that looked round"?

Student 1 - That book was stupid all the way through it.
Student 2 - I think this book is going to be good once we get into it.
Student 3 - I couldn't wait to start reading it but then when I got through the first chapter, it was sort of a disappointment from reading the back because it sounded so funny.

In over three-quarters of the recorded conferences, the students compared the book they were reading, or aspects of it, to other novels, movies, people and/or life events.

> Student 1 - Bean looks like the witch off the Wizard of Oz.
> Student 2 - The Wicked Witch of the West.
> Student 1 - All he needs is a dress! (Makes a witch laugh.) Oh, his sister must be the Wicked Witch of the West!
> Others - Yeah! (They all laugh.)

The children empathized with characters or imagined themselves in characters' positions in two-thirds of the recorded conferences.

> Student 1 - If I were Ashley, I would try to see what Murphy was doing.
> Student 2 - If I were Murphy, I would just tell Ashley.
> Student 3 - If I were Murphy, I'd get her and speak to her rationally--not fighting all the time and tell what really happened.

In approximately one-half of the conferences, the children articulated predictions for texts, and expressed their opinions about illustrators and/or illustrations (a small percentage of the novels had pictures).

> Student 1 - I predict that if that man is the dad that he just wants to see her and talk to her and see what she's like.
> Student 2 - I predict the reason the dad is so mad is because they might have had a divorce and the husband wants the kids.
> Student 3 - Maybe he wasn't in jail--maybe he stayed away for awhile and wrote a threatening note saying he wanted to see the kids, otherwise the mother wouldn't have run away with the kids.
>
> Student 1 - I like the pictures--they're not colourful or anything but they're good.
> Student 2 - The pictures are black and white.
> Student 1 - I like them.
> Student 2 - I like them too. You don't need colour to make it look good--there's a really good picture on page 111. And there's another good one on page 125--it has lots of detail.

The children described their feelings about textually related aspects, and expressed their opinions of the settings in approximately one-third of the recorded conferences.

> Student - I felt sorry for the younger children who got split up from their parents.
> Others - Yeah.
>
> Student - It didn't always explain where he was and he wasn't at many places more than his house or school.

There were three conferences in which the students articulated a visualization of some aspect of the text.

> Student 1 - I can imagine him with brown hair and a moustache.
> Student 2 - I can imagine him with a beard and he's tall.

Summary of the Recorded Conferences

The general category of **personal engagement responses** accounted for nearly one-half of the total interactions coded for the recorded conferences. Providing personal opinions of textually related aspects constituted approximately one-third of the overall interactions and over two-thirds of the interactions classified in the **personal engagement responses** category. In addition, expressing opinions about plot and characters constituted approximately one-half of the remarks in the personal opinion subcategory.

Overall, there were approximately four times as many interactions coded in the **personal engagement responses** general category as in the **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts** category. As well, there were about three and one-half times as many remarks classified in the **extended understandings of texts** category as in the **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts** category. Further, there were slightly more interactions coded in the **personal engagement responses** category than in the **extended understandings of texts** category.

The largest number of interactions were coded in the subcategory of talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion. Providing explanations for or examples to support ideas had approximately two-thirds as many interactions as the largest subcategory. The following four subcategories had approximately one-third as many interactions as the largest subcategory: expressing personal opinions of plot and characters, articulating "I wonder" statements, and talking about plot (retelling and/or summarizing).

There were very few occurrences of the students engaging in the following types of dialogue: talking about settings; talking about parts of the texts they experienced difficulties understanding; describing their feelings about textually related aspects; and visualizing textually related aspects.

There were significant differences in the number and the frequency of interactions coded in the various subcategories. The number of different subcategories in which the data was categorized for each conference ranged from 8 to 15 (out of a possible 18 subcategories). There were considerable differences in the total number of interactions coded for the various subcategories for each conference (i.e. 25 to 90).

In approximately one-half of the conferences, there was at least one example of students posing questions to each other. Sometimes the questions appeared to be asked to draw a more reticent group member into the conversation and other times, students seemed to be seeking others' opinions or thoughts.

> Student 1- I think they should call it Murphy and Ashley and the Big Fight.
> Student 2 - I don't know what they should call it.
> Student 1- What do you think of the title, Student 3?

Hitchhiking was one aspect of the conferences evaluated by the teachers. The teachers stated they were looking for conversations that flowed, where students responded to one another. There appeared to be differences in the groups' successes in hitchhiking on each other's ideas. There was a great amount of hitchhiking in two conferences (involving two of the strongest academic groups in the class). In nine conferences, the students hitchhiked on one another's ideas to some extent, and in seven conferences there was very little hitchhiking.

Although the children expressed a large number of **personal engagement responses** and **extended** their **understandings of texts** during the conferences, the general overall discussion level of the conferences seemed to be superficial. There were no examples of the children engaging in indepth discussions of textually related aspects or topics. The conversations did not seem to deepen or extend the students' lived-through experiences of the literary works. Although there were several examples of students providing explanations for their ideas, the conversations were not well developed. Generally, one or two comments would be articulated about a particular topic or idea and then the subject of the conversation would be changed by a group member (i.e. there was little, if any, evidence of the children engaging in the process of "expatiation"). Hence, the conversations appeared to jump from one topic to the next without any 'real' discussion of one subject or idea. For example:

> Student 1 - I think the author could have put more detail to his sister in the book.
> Student 2 - Yeah, at least tell her name in the first eight chapters.
> Student 3 - That's what I wrote in my response journal.
> Student 1 - It doesn't tell her attitude either. It just says she's spoiled.
> Student 2 - It would have been a more interesting book if the author would have included how she got spoiled and how Jacob has to live

without everything.
Student 3 - I wonder where the author got the idea for this book.
Student 2 - Maybe it happened to him.
Student 1 - It could have happened to him or his friend because his name is Gary--not Jacob.
Student 2 - It might have been about him and he probably just changed his name to make it look like it wasn't him.
Student 3 - It could have happened to him.
Student 1 - It could have happened to his brother or his sister.
Student 3 - Or some girl he knew who had a boyfriend like Jacob.
Student 1 - When I looked at the cover of this book I thought the title was dumb and when you read the first chapter it was like boring.

Independent Conferences

The researcher examined 25 student independent conferences (i.e. the conversations were not audio-recorded for the teachers nor were the teachers present during the conferences). When analyzing the data, the researcher excluded five of the examples as three were prereading conferences and two were postreading conferences. The guidelines for middle conferences differed significantly from those for prereading and postreading conferences and consequently, the contents of the latter two types of conferences were affected by the required procedures.

Analyses of the conferences revealed that the discussions could be categorized into three general categories with various types of dialogues constituting each general category (see Figure 10). The researcher recorded the number of each type of interaction which occurred during the conferences.

Figure 10 - Student Interactions During Independent Conferences

General Categories	Number of Conferences	Number of Occurrences
Tapped Understandings and/or Knowledge of Texts		
1. talked about plot (retelling and/or summarizing)	17	64
2. talked about characters	08	12
3. talked about setting	00	00
Extended Understandings of Texts		
1. provided explanations for or examples to support ideas	18	81
2. talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion	16	108
3. talked about what they did not understand	07	09
4. made "I wonder" statements	13	41
5. hypothesized possible reasons or explanations for "I wonder" statements	08	22
Personal Engagement Responses		
1. compared novels to other books, movies, people and/or life events	13	30
2. made predictions	16	46
3. described feelings about some textual aspect	04	06
4. empathized with characters or imagined self in characters' positions	13	24
5. visualized some aspect of text	05	13
6. provided personal opinion		
a) plot	16	78
b) characters	17	85
c) setting	02	04
d) author's technique or style	16	52
e) illustrator and/or illustrations (in text and/or cover)	09	17
f) book as a whole or central idea of text	17	54

The first general category in which the students' interactions were coded was **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts**. In three-quarters of the independent conferences, the children talked about the plots of the novels.

> Student 1 - When Mrs. Ross said that Jed would take him over the river, Jed just led him into the river--Jed just led him into the forest or something.
> Student 2 - There was someone waiting on the other side and he just took them to a little house.
> Student 3 - And then the next morning he was going to take them to uh, to that place.

The students talked about the characters of the books in over one-half of the independent conferences.

> Student - Mrs. Vedda is so fashion conscious. She brought so many clothes with her and really fancy ones and they're camping in the wilderness.

Extended understandings of texts was the second general category in which the conference data was categorized. In over three-quarters of the independent conferences, the students provided explanations for their ideas, and talked to clarify or further their understandings and/or discussions.

> Student - I don't know how H.P. can like Annette because they are very different. They dress different and their manners are way different.
>
> Student 1 - Those helmets that the riders wear, have they described them in the book?
> Student 2 - Equestrian riders don't really fall on their heads a lot.
> Student 3 - They only really use them much for when they're jumping.
> Student 4 - Well safety reasons I guess--they probably have to.
> Student 3 - Yeah, like if your horse suddenly steps on something and....
> Student 4 - Bucks you off or sometimes they stomp on your head or something. I never wear a helmet when I ride a horse.
> Student 2 - I think it's only for the jumping part.

The children articulated "I wonder" statements in two-thirds of the independent conferences.

> Student - I wonder if they get to Canada, and the slave hunter came back and he saw them, I wonder if he could take them back.

The children talked about parts of the novels they were experiencing difficulties in understanding and hypothesized possible reasons or explanations for their "I wonder" statements in over one-third of the independent conferences.

> Student - You know when the people were surrounding the hill? I didn't get that part.
>
> Student 1 - I wonder why the author decided to write this book.
> Student 2 - Maybe she had a grandmother who did this.
> Student 1 - Maybe she wanted people to see what it was like back then and how unreasonable it was or something.

The third general category in which the conference dialogues were categorized was **personal engagement responses**. In three-quarters of the conferences, the students made predictions of future textual events, provided their personal opinions of the plot, the characters, the author's technique or style, and the book as a whole or the central idea of the text.

> Student - I predict that Deborah is going to use Katie to get back at Lissa.
>
> Student - I like the part when they are almost to the island and the canoe tips and they come up soaked and Sandy says, "I thought these lifejackets were suppose to hold us up."
>
> Student 1 - That's something about this author--she doesn't really explain things as much as you want her to. She just kind of says it and then goes on to something else.
> Student 2 - But I bet she did a lot of research.
> Student 3 - Yeah, to find out all about the equestrian stuff.
>
> Student 1 - I thought the book was dumb in the middle but now it is getting better.
> Student 2 - Anybody think this book is dumb?
> Student 3 - Well, it's not really dumb but from what I've read, it's not the most excellent book I've read.

In approximately two-thirds of the conferences, the children compared the book they were reading, or aspects of it, to other novels, movies, people and/or life events, and empathized with characters or imagined themselves in characters' situations.

> Student 1 - They really remind me of my cats and dogs. Cause Puddles and Misty, they're both scared--they're both scared like Weeps. And then Miss Bannersweet--she's like WHOA!
> Student 2 - Who's that?
> Student 1 - My cat. She'll rip you to pieces. Just like Wol does to that dog.
>
> Student - If I were Uncle Jed I would have fought in the war but it depends on what the choice was.

In nearly one-half of the independent conferences, the students talked about illustrators and/or illustrations.

> Student 1 - The picture of Charlie on the cover doesn't look anything like him. He looks well fed.
> Student 2 - I think someone else must have done the cover.
> Student 3 - The illustrator--he's the same one who does lots of Dahl's other books.
> Student 1 - He does scratchy illustrations but that's his style.

The children described their feelings about textually related aspects and visualized aspects of the novels in one-quarter of the independent conferences.

> Student - I got kinda scared when that lady came out with that gun and pointed it at Liza.
>
> Student 1 - I imagine the teacher is tall and she wears glasses and has a bun.
> Student 2 - I see her with white/gray hair in a bun, tiny glasses that sit on her nose--you know the kind that don't have any arms. No teeth, and she stands with her her arms on her hips. And she has lines on her face and she wears long dresses with long sleeves with lace.

Personal engagement responses constituted over one-half of the total number of remarks coded for the independent conferences. Of the **personal engagement responses**, over two-thirds were coded in the provided personal opinion subcategory. Of the latter, approximately one-half were constituted by opinions of plot and characters.

Summary of the Independent Conferences

Overall, there were approximately five and one-half times more remarks coded in the **personal engagement responses** category than in the **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts** category. There were three and one-half times more interactions classified in the **extended understandings of texts** category than in the **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts** category. Approximately one-third of the total interactions were accounted for by the second general category of **extended understandings of texts**. Less than one-tenth of the total interactions were coded in the first general category, **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts**.

There were very few occurrences of the students engaging in the following types of dialogue: talking about characters; talking about parts of the texts they experienced difficulties in understanding; describing feelings about textually related aspects; visualizing textually related aspects; and talking about settings.

There were significant differences in the number and frequency of interactions coded in the various subcategories. The number of different subcategories in which the data was categorized for each conference ranged from 5 to 14 (out of a possible 18 subcategories). There were considerable differences in the total number of interactions coded for the various subcategories for each conference (i.e.12 to 139).

One student independent conference (of the top academic reading group) accounted for approximately one-quarter of the total number of interactions of the following three subcategories: provided explanations for or examples to support ideas; talked to clarify or to further understanding and/or discussion; and expressed personal opinions of plot.

In one-half of the conferences, there was at least one example of the students posing questions to each other. The students' questions seemed to seek others' opinions or thoughts, or textual information about some aspect. In very few conferences, the questions appeared to be asked to draw a more reticent group member into the conversations.

Hitchhiking was one aspect of the conferences evaluated by the teachers. The teachers stated that they were looking for conversations that flowed, where students responded to one another. There appeared to be differences in the groups' successes in hitchhiking on each other's ideas. There was a great amount of hitchhiking in four of the conferences. Three of these independent conferences were those of the strongest academic group in the class. In seven conferences, the students hitchhiked on one another's ideas to some extent, and in nine conferences there was very little hitchhiking.

Although the children expressed a large number of **personal engagement responses** and **extended their understandings of texts** during their conferences, the general overall discussion level of the conferences seemed to be superficial, although there were a few examples of students engaging in indepth discussions of textually related aspects or topics. The discussions did not seem to deepen or extend the students' lived-through experiences of the literary works. There were several examples of students providing explanations for their ideas, although usually, the conversations were not well developed. Typically, one or two comments would be articulated about a particular topic or idea and then the subject of the conversation would be changed by a group member (i.e. there was little, if any, engagement in the process of "expatiation"). In general, the conversations appeared to jump from one topic to the next without any 'real' discussion of one subject or idea.

Discussion of the Students' Interactions During the Conferences

Analyses of the data revealed that the children dialogued about the same kinds of topics in the three types of conferences (i.e. teacher, recorded and independent). In both the independent and recorded conferences, interactions classified in the first general category of **tapped understandings and/or knowledge of texts** constituted approximately one-tenth of the total coded remarks, whereas, this category accounted for approximately one-third to one-half of the total student coded remarks in the teachers' conferences. Therefore, it appeared that when the students were conferencing about texts independently, they conversed less about literal aspects of the books and consequently devoted more of their conversations to **extending their understandings of texts** and articulating **personal engagement responses**. The substantial number of teacher questions which **tapped students' understandings and/or knowledge of texts** cogently influenced both the number and the types of student interactions which occurred during the teachers' conferences.

In both the independent and recorded conferences, articulation of **personal engagement responses** accounted for about one-half of the total number of interactions, whereas, expression of **personal engagement responses** constituted approximately one-quarter to one-third of the overall interactions in the teachers' conferences.

There was an approximate equal number of **personal engagement responses** and **extended understandings of texts** interactions in the recorded conferences. In the independent conferences, there were one-third more **personal engagement responses** than **extended understandings of texts** interactions.

Categorization of the recorded and independent conference data illustrated that providing personal opinions about textually related aspects was significantly the most recurring type of interaction in both types of conference. Articulation of personal opinions constituted over two-thirds of the total number of **personal engagement responses** in both types of conferences. Although the number of student personal opinions were much smaller in the teacher conferences, the subcategory accounted for approximately the same proportion of overall interactions in the **personal engagement responses** category as in the independent and recorded conferences (i.e. over two-thirds).

In both the recorded and the independent conferences, articulation of personal opinion of plot and characters accounted for approximately one-half of the total remarks coded in the subcategory of provided personal opinion. Although fewer in number when compared to the independent and recorded conferences, expression of opinions of plot and characters constituted one-half to two-thirds of the remarks classified in the personal opinion subcategory in the teachers' conferences.

Even though the most recurring interaction in both recorded and independent conferences was talk to clarify or further understandings and/or discussions, the latter type of dialogue occurred approximately twice the extent in recorded conferences than in independent conferences. The general category of **extended understandings of texts** constituted over one-third of the total remarks coded in the independent conferences and approximately four-tenths of the overall interactions of the recorded conferences. It would seem logical that the children's conversations would be affected by the fact the teachers would be listening to the tapes. When examining the number of remarks coded as **extended understandings of texts** in the teachers' conferences, the latter accounted for one-quarter to one-third of the total students' interactions (although the number of remarks were much smaller compared to the independent and recorded conferences).

Approximately one-third of the **extended understandings of texts** category in both the recorded and independent conferences was constituted by the subcategory of providing explanations for or examples to support ideas. Although fewer in number, this subcategory accounted for about the same proportion of overall student interactions in the second general category in both teachers' conferences as well.

Articulating "I wonder" statements constituted about one-quarter of the remarks coded in the **extended understandings of texts** category in the independent conferences and approximately one-fifth in the recorded conferences. However, there were very few occurrences of the students engaging in this type of interaction during the teachers' conferences. Hypothesizing possible reasons of explanations for "I wonder" statements accounted for approximately one-tenth of the total number of coded remarks in the **extended understandings of texts** category in both recorded and independent conferences. There were no occurrences of students engaging in this type of talk during Mrs. Shaw's conferences and two examples of this subcategory in Mrs. Perez's conferences.

Comparatively, there were 10 subcategories (out of 18) which had approximately the same number of interactions in both independent and recorded conferences (see Figures 5 and 6). In both types of conferences, there was very little student dialogue categorized in the following categories: talking about the setting; talking about parts of the text they experienced difficulties understanding; describing feelings about some textual aspects; expressing personal opinion of settings; and visualizing some textual aspect. As these types of interactions occurred with such low frequencies in both the recorded and independent conferences, the differences between the latter were inconsequential.

In the teachers' conferences, there were very few student interactions coded into the following categories: talking about what they did not understand; making "I wonder" statements; hypothesizing possible reasons or explanations for "I wonder" statements; describing feelings about some textual aspect; empathizing with characters or imagined self in characters' positions; visualizing some aspect of text; and providing personal opinion of illustrator and/or illustrations. Therefore, there were several common subcategories in the three types of conferences with few coded remarks.

Chapter Summary

Analyses of the conference data revealed that various types of interactions occurred during the teacher, recorded and independent conferences. The conference 'talk' of the students seemed to be influenced by the teachers' behaviours. As well, audio-recording conferences for the teachers appeared to affect the content of the children's conversations. Overall, it seemed that the children articulated responses which were more aesthetic in nature during the independent and recorded conferences than during the teacher conferences.

CHAPTER 6

Analysis of the Students' Written Responses to Literature

Introduction

A presentation and analysis of the students' written responses to literature and other data related to the written responses are included in chapter six. The chapter is divided into six major sections, each dealing with one focus student. Discussion of the grade four children's responses is followed by a presentation of the data of the grade five students. The sections about each focus student are divided into six subsections: a student profile; the focus child's written responses to literature and his/her discussion of the latter; the teachers' comments about the student's responses; the researcher's remarks about the focus child's responses; the student's beliefs about other components of response writing; and the focus child's comments about other aspects of readers' workshop.

The Focus Children

Vince

Profile

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw described Vince as a below average grade four student whose performance level did not accurately reflect his actual capabilities. Mrs. Shaw discussed how Vince was a "fairly sharp" young man but felt his off-task behaviours and lack of concentration interfered with his performance. Mrs. Perez asserted, "Cause he's such a fool-around kind of guy, he hasn't got the skills he should have been getting simply because he hasn't attended to what he's doing so now...he's got two things to work on because he's got to go for quality of content and he's got to catch up on the mechanics."

On several occasions, the teachers noted the low level of Vince's writing skills. Mrs. Perez stated, "His performance in his written work is definitely below his ability to think and ability to discuss." Further, Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez remarked how they "have to keep remembering that he is one of the weaker kids in fourth grade" as Vince's verbal skills led them to expect higher quality work.

The teachers expressed concern about the amount of responsibility Vince was expected to shoulder. They felt Vince was 'getting away' with more than he should and believed additional guidance and accountability from the home would positively affect his success at school.

The teachers stated that Vince was stronger in math than language arts. Mrs. Perez asserted that Vince grasped new concepts "fairly readily" and was better at computation than problem solving. As well, Vince's interest in particular aspects of the 'content' areas was mentioned by the teachers. "He's the kind of guy too that really enjoys content. So like in social studies or science if there's something that really appeals to him--if you can capture his imagination either with history or science experiments or anything like that--he really likes that."

When asked to describe himself as a reader, Vince answered, "I'm not the best--like average really. Not a really good reader or anything." He felt he was an average reader because he was not a "really really fast" reader and he experienced difficulties understanding some texts. Vince stated his favourite books to read were those with lots of action. As well, he articulated that "from the library I like ones with pictures with neat stuff to look at--but when I'm just reading, I like funny books usually."

Vince's initial reply to the query of describing himself as a writer, addressed spelling. He stated, "Well, spelling--not so great." Vince continued his answer by asserting that if he tried, he was "pretty good" at writing responses and stories. He expressed his preference for writing stories over responses. He felt stories were more "fun to write" because "writing a response is just telling about what happens and it's kind of boring but not really and then doing a story you get to make all this stuff up and write it all down."

The researcher observed Vince's group during readers' workshop on multiple occasions. Overall, he seemed to be an active participant in his group, making significant contributions in conferences and other activities.

Vince appeared to be relaxed and enthusiastic during the interviews with the researcher. He answered all of the questions and clearly expressed his ideas and opinions. Vince openly admitted when he was unsure of something and when needed, he asked for further explanation of specific questions. Vince seemed to discuss his written responses with the researcher in an honest and candid manner.

Written Responses

From a four month time period, Vince chose seven responses to discuss with the researcher. His general evaluative comments of the seven responses he selected have been indicated in parentheses. No corrections have been made to Vince's reproduced journal entries.

Response #1 (excellent)

I am reading Owls in the Family by Farley Mowat I am on p. 90

What impressed me in this chapter was when wol broght in the skunk to the dinner table. I think I understand why weeps is so shy because when he was youg he had rocks droped on him. he's like my dog pudels my mom fond her and she is very shy and kind of mean. I think the author lives in the praries because he tells so mush about them.

Response #2 (really good)

I am reading Owls in the Family by Farely Mowat. Wear on p. 69.

Last time we red they had a parad and they deceraded there wagons. but Bruse put a snake in a shoe box when he opened it at the parade he opend the shoe box and there was a rattle snake in it evrey body ran and the pets did to. Weeps remids me of my one cat and my one dog because my cat and dog are shy and don't have much confedece. but Wol reminds me of my other cat and dog because they will try stuff and they have confedenc. I predict that at the end of the book the two owls will ether go into a zoo or back in to the wild. I felt happy when Billy found Weeps because he was in a oil drum and having rocks droped on him and when it was'ent the owls tererising the parade but I ges they kind of did.

Response #3 (really good)

I am reading Owls in the Family. by farley Mowat. I am on page 51.

I thot when Wol was on the cat the cat was dead. because wols claws where digen in to him. I think weeps will never fly because on the cover he is on the bike but Wol is flying. I predict that weeps will try to fly when nobody is around but he will fall from the sky. if I were weeps I would have at least flapt my wings when billy thro my off the grage. I think I know why weeps dosen't fly because he had barrly eny confedince.

Response #4 (pretty good)

I am reading Owls in the family by farley mowat I am on p. 36.

I predict that he will get an other owl because on the cover there are two. I felt sorry for the two owls that died because I was sad when they found them. Billys dog mutt is scared of storms so he jumped up on billys bed. I think the author could huve had more action eralyer in the book because there has'ent bin much action so fare.

Response #5 (O.K., a bit better)

I am reading Harriet the Spy by Louise fitzhugh I am on page 191.

if I were Harriet I would Have grabd the note book when they were reading it. I predict that they will all becom friends agen. this chapter is very impressing I think. I think the athor could have made Harriet have one friend reyt now.

Response #6 (not very good)

We are reading The Vandarian Incident by Marytn Godfrey I am on p. 20 I feel sorry Tyler he might die a big sand storm is coming it would rid him apart he doe'st no it is thare but feren his teacher does.

Response #7 (not so great)

I am reading the Vandarian Incident we are on p 5.

I thot that this chapter gave alot of informtion this book is about a boy hwo is on the last corss he will be the first person to finish this if he does.

Vince judged four responses positively, with comments ranging from "excellent" to "really good" to "pretty good". He supported his evaluations by stating these particular journal entries incorporated some or all of the following points: used several 'starters' from the mind map; included explanations for his ideas; were written in the correct 'form'; and contained a sufficient amount of content.

> This is a really good one, I think. It's good...Well because I have it in the right form and it has lots of writing and everything. I got predictions and I said why... and I said if I were him I'd at least tried to flap my wings and try to fly. Then I put I predicted....

Vince judged Response #5 as "O.K., a bit better." He noted how he had made some predictions and empathized with the character in this response (i.e. used ideas from the mind map).

> Cause it had "I predicted" in it--like I predicted what was going to happen and stuff. And I 'beed' the character--like I didn't know what to say--I was the character like.

Vince evaluated Response #6 as "not very good" and Response #7 as "not so great". He remarked how these two entries were not written in the proper form, lacked content, and contained poor spelling.

> Not so great...Because the spelling, it's not very long--like they say that they should be quite longer and...like again with this one it's not

> described very well--not the right form really because it doesn't have who it's by up here and stuff.

When questioned how he could improve the specific responses he had discussed with the researcher, Vince had several ideas. He felt he could improve his journal entries in some or all of the following ways: spelling more conventionally, using more ideas from the mind map, writing longer entries, and adhering to the correct format. He stated, "Put a bit more stuff from the mind map, I think...maybe made it a bit longer...might have made it a bit better." Thus Vince was quite consistent in the criteria he used to judge his entries, as three areas he identified requiring improvement were the converse of characteristics previously articulated in his descriptions of 'good' responses.

Previous to selecting responses from his journal to discuss with the researcher, Vince was asked for his opinion of what made a 'good' response. He felt a 'good' response included his thoughts about particular parts of the texts.

> Well like having more than just telling about the book--having what you think about the book and stuff like that. Like say I thought like--I tell a part and what I thought about it--like if it was funny or something like that.

For Vince, examining and reflecting upon his responses resulted in a fuller explanation of the characteristics of a 'good' response (as indicated in his discussions of the responses he evaluated positively).

When asked what he thought he needed to do to improve his responses overall, Vince felt he needed to use more ideas from the mind map, to write thoughts or comments while reading in the back of his notebook, and to increase the amount written in his responses.

> Well, use quite a bit more mind map and like when I'm reading, write down stuff in the back and then I'll have ideas of what to

write...sometimes write a bit more.

Again Vince's comments addressed concepts similar to those described in his discussions of 'good' responses.

Teachers' Comments

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw articulated several positive points about the four responses Vince judged favourably. They discussed Vince's beginning use of capitals and periods and general improvement in writing mechanics, his inclusion of several ideas from the mind map, and his initial attempts at explaining his ideas. The latter two points were also mentioned by Vince in his discussion of the first four responses. The teachers were cognizant of Vince's progress in response writing and noted that for him, these were 'better' responses than others he had written.

In response #5, the entry Vince rated as "O.K.", the teachers observed that Vince had used the proper form and was trying to use the mind map. The teachers identified areas requiring improvement: explanations of ideas; length of entry; and writing mechanics.

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez concurred with Vince's evaluations of Responses #6 and #7. They stated that those two entries were incomplete, were not written in the proper form, and lacked content. Thus the teachers' and Vince's comments were very consistent because whether discussing favourable or unfavourable aspects of the responses, the remarks focused on: the use of ideas from the mind map; the incorporation of explanations; the quantity of content; the adherence to the correct format; and the mechanical aspects of writing.

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez wrote replies to some of the entries Vince discussed with the researcher. Generally, they wrote evaluative comments about his responses which addressed aspects of both content and mechanics. As well, suggestions for improvement were offered, and questions, aimed at furthering his thinking were posed.

> Example 1 - Have you forgotten to use your mind map? I don't see one prediction or question or visualization...Your written responses should show more thought Vince.
>
> Example 2 - In your entry today you made a comparison, a prediction and expressed a feeling. You explained why you thought that way, which is good. Please try to use correct spelling so I can read your writing.
>
> Example 3 - Are you enjoying this book? Sometimes there doesn't need to be a lot of action to be a good book. I liked your comparison to Tom, but you didn't say why.

On several occasions, the teachers stated that Vince had shown improvement in his response writing. When asked how Vince could improve his responses overall, the teachers suggested some recommendations. Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw felt that both the content and the mechanics of Vince's responses would improve with increased concentration and effort. They noted he needed to continue writing responses similar to those that both he and they had described positively.

Researcher's Comments

Generally, Vince included an equal number of response types in his journal entries (personal, comparisons, predictions, feelings, criticisms and opinions). In five of Vince's responses he provided 'some' reasons to explain his ideas. The inclusion of unrelated main ideas in six of his entries seemed to affect the flow of the responses. The researcher believed that Vince needed to reflect on his emotional responses to the texts in greater depth. The quality of

Vince's responses would have been improved by his extending and developing one or two of the main ideas in his entries with fuller explanations and additional discussion of his thoughts.

The researcher utilized the classification system developed by Cox and Many (1992b) to determine the stance of the responses (i.e. efferent/aesthetic continuum). The researcher discovered that four of Vince's responses contained elements of both aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis (Responses #2, #4, #5, and #6). Two of Vince's responses contained primarily aesthetic responses where selective attention was given to specific parts of texts (Responses #1 and #3). One response seemed to be written from the most efferent point on the efferent/aesthetic continuum (Response #7).

Other Information on Response Writing

When asked what it meant to Vince to write responses to the books he read, he replied, "Well writing responses--I just write about what I read kind of and how I thought what the author could do sometimes." For the particular responses Vince discussed with the researcher, there were three instances of comments about the authors.

Vince explained he went about writing responses by thinking about his reading from the previous day and then writing about "what happened, like kind of what I liked and the stuff like that--how I liked it." Vince stated he used some of the ideas going through his mind while reading in his responses. When asked how he selected which ideas to write about, he replied, "Well ones that are good--like just not like normal stuff but like out of the ordinary kind of." He qualified the latter statement by explaining that a 'good' idea would be "like really a funny part and then I'd write about that and then say what I thought about it." Further discussion revealed that Vince used the mind map when writing his responses as both a source of ideas and a model of how to initially phrase his thoughts.

Vince contended the teachers had the students write responses to the books they read in order to ascertain each individual's thoughts about the texts.

> Vince - So they have something to read so they know what you think about the book and stuff like that. And then it's not like a recorded conference where you're altogether and you're not sharing your thoughts really.
> Researcher - So they're finding out what you, what Vince thinks of the book?
> Vince - Yeah, not everybody else--just by yourself.

Vince indicated that response writing was less enjoyable for him than other components of readers' workshop (e.g. recorded conferences). He stated, "I still like it but not as much as the other stuff." Vince expressed difficulties with generating ideas to write about in his response journal and explained that "Sometimes you don't remember what to write about and you don't have ideas and stuff like that." As well, he acknowledged that he found it easier to express his ideas orally than in written form. Vince explained, "Well because you have to write it down and it takes a bit longer than if you did a recorded conference--a recorded conference is just like a response journal but you don't write it down--you just say what you think."

Vince felt that writing responses was a worthwhile activity as the teachers were able to more clearly understand the students' ideas (as opposed to listening to the tapes of the recorded conferences). As well, he noted how writing provided a different medium than discussion for expression of ideas.

> Well cause it's still--it helps the teachers not to just listen because sometimes you can't understand what they say and sometimes it's just

> different to write--sometimes you have different ideas when you write.

When asked if he thought he had learned anything by writing responses Vince answered, "Yeah, kind of." He explained he had learned how to write responses and how to express his ideas in writing.

> Well, I've learned how to write it and you learn how to write in a response journal--like how to say what you think on paper kind of--things like that.

As well, he felt writing responses helped him better understand the books he read as writing ideas enhanced his memory of the events in the texts. He explained, "Because you write something down and then you have that more in your head and you remember what happened last time you read and stuff like that and then you can understand the book better."

Vince felt response writing was easier for those books which were "easier to read." He identified Fantastic Mr. Fox as a text which was easy to write responses to "because it was easy to read and it had like lots of action so you had lots to write about it." To Vince, The Vandarian Incident and Harriet the Spy were more difficult texts to respond to due to the comprehensibility levels of the novels. As well, he stated his personal engagement with a text affected his response writing.

> It was more--I couldn't really understand it--some of the things that they said and stuff like that...Well, we didn't even really like that book--we didn't finish it. It was just--a bit harder.

When writing responses, Vince explained that his group members would talk to one another as they wrote. He stated they would discuss textual aspects but usually did not share the content of their responses during their conversations. "Well we just talk about like--well you forget what happened the other day so we talk about what happened and we write down it and stuff like that." However, observations by the researcher indicated that in general, the conversations which occurred in Vince's group during response writing time were only somewhat related to textual content. Further, it was interesting that when queried if he would like to read other people's responses, Vince answered, "Yes, sometimes, yes." Vince thought he could learn more about response writing by reading others' entries.

> Because then you'd have ideas of how to write because sometimes you don't know how to start it and like maybe other people can write it a bit better than you can or something and then you can get a bit better at it.

However in his group, Vince's members did not share their entries when composing.

Vince thought group conferences assisted him with his response writing as he was able to glean ideas from members to include in his response journal. He indicated that sometimes he used ideas from his response journal when conferencing. As well, Vince stated that he used the mind map at the front of his response journal when conferencing as it provided him with a source of ideas.

When asked how the teachers had helped him with his response writing Vince replied, "Well they tell us--well, I use to not put why I thought of my reasons - like the 'becauses' and stuff and now I do that and they told me to do that and now it works a lot better if I do that." He explained how the teachers had made this recommendation both orally in teacher conferences and in their written comments. As well, Vince described how the teachers' written comments assisted him as they indicated both correct and incorrect aspects of his responses. He explained, "Cause you know what to correct and what to do right or stuff you made mistakes on." Further questioning revealed that Vince thought the initial lessons on response writing had also been helpful.

Vince felt there was really nothing more Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw could do to help the students write better responses. He stated, "They do quite a bit to help us. Um, no, I don't think so--not really. Cause it's really--we have to figure out the stuff to write in - by reading and getting ideas."

The researcher inquired if Vince thought he had responded (in his head) to literature before grade 3. (Vince told the researcher he had also written responses to literature in grade 3). He answered, "Well, I didn't read as much books then but not really I don't think." Through further questioning, using hypothetical comments a reader might make about a text and by making reference to the mind map, Vince acknowledged that indeed he had been responding in various ways while reading before he was in Mrs. Perez's and Mrs. Shaw's class. However, Vince articulated that at that time, he was unaware of the specific terms or concepts used to identify the particular responses he was experiencing while reading (i.e. terms from the mind map - prediction, criticism, opinion). Perhaps the latter factor influenced Vince's perception that he had "learned how to write responses" in his class.

Other Aspects of Readers' Workshop

Generally, Vince's descriptions of the components of readers' workshop indicated a satisfactory understanding of the procedures and expectations of the program.

On the evaluation sheet for independent conferences 'quality' of responses was one facet the children were to evaluate. Vince expressed some confusion with the meaning of this aspect ("I don't get that") but thought 'quality' of responses referred to providing explanations and examples to support articulated ideas or opinions. For example, he described a poor quality response as one where "you just said you like the book and that's almost all you said through the whole thing." In order to improve the latter response, Vince believed an individual would need to "say a part that you really like--what you like about the book and why you like it." Although referring to oral responses, similarities to Vince's earlier remarks regarding 'good' written responses were evident in his answer.

Vince was asked to discuss the three types of conferences his group engaged in during readers' workshop. Vince described an independent conference as "almost like doing your response journal but it's like talking out loud." He explained how his group talked about their opinions of texts and used the mind map at the front of their journals to provide them with topics for discussion. Vince described a recorded conference as similar to an independent conference as "we just talk about almost the same stuff" and "it's just a bit different because it's on tape and sometimes you don't know what to say." He acknowledged that he used his mind map in this type of conference as well. He felt a teacher conference was "quite a bit different" as the group did not discuss what they liked about the texts. Rather, the teachers talked with them and posed questions. Vince verbalized enjoyment of a teacher conference because "they ask questions and then we have more to say because sometimes you don't know what to say and if they ask us something then we are able to say something." For each type of conference, Vince expressed concern about having content to discuss.

Vince stated he liked readers' workshop because it gave him an opportunity to not only read, but to read with a group. He stated, "I don't always read a lot but then in readers' workshop we read and it's funner reading in a group than just by yourself." Book shares and book celebrations were Vince's favourite parts of readers' workshop because "it feels good to finish the book and then you get to do something for finishing the book." If provided the opportunity to change any aspect of readers' workshop, Vince articulated he would change the members of the groups in mid year.

Karen

Profile

The teachers described Karen as "an average student" in grade four. They felt Karen's "potential for growth" was inhibited by both her lack of skills and self-confidence. Mrs. Perez believed Karen was "fairly bright" but experienced difficulties expressing herself both orally and in her written work. Mrs. Shaw stated, "It's like it's all there and then her mind is ahead and then she starts writing what she's thinking but she leaves out parts." The teachers believed Karen imagined "herself as a writer" but they felt this perception was inaccurate. As well, the teachers stated Karen was stronger in language arts than math. But again, they contended Karen's perceptions of herself were imprecise as Mrs. Perez stated Karen was stronger in math than Karen thought.

When asked to describe herself as a reader, Karen answered, "Well, fast. I like to read." She believed she was a good reader because she spent "every spare minute reading." Karen mentioned how she read aloud to her mother every night and felt this practice would assist her with her reading. She stated she liked to read Gordon Korman books and "humorous books and mysteries." Karen also indicated she enjoyed reading books about horses and the environment.

Karen's initial reply to the query of describing herself as a writer was, "I like writing." Karen expressed a desire for her class to have a writing program similar to readers' workshop as she wanted more time to write because she enjoyed composing stories.

During her interviews with the researcher, Karen seemed to be relaxed and confident. She answered all of the questions posed by the researcher and readily asked for clarification when needed. Indeed, Karen asked the researcher some questions about the present study. On several occasions the researcher had to request Karen to repeat her answers as the connections between her thoughts were unclear. Karen came prepared to the second interview with comments written about the specific responses she had selected to discuss with the researcher.

Karen seemed to be an enthusiastic member and active participant in her group's conferences and other activities. She expressed some frustration when two particular members of her group were off-task. On several occasions, the researcher observed Karen encouraging those individuals to refocus and contribute positively to the group.

Written Responses

From a four month time period, Karen chose four responses to discuss with the researcher. Karen's assessments of her responses have been included in parentheses. No corrections have been made to her reproduced journal entries.

Response #1 (good)

I reading Bugs Potter live at Nickaninny by Gordon Korman. I am on page 15.

I don't understand why Bugs is so potily in Bugs Potter live at Nickaninny and rude in Who's Bugs Potter?

I can see out in the deep forest wear Bugs is with no pepole no radioi and no drums. One time I went camping in a place sort of like this But I only stay for 2 days not 2 weeks.

Response #2 (good)

I am reading Harriet the Spy by Luise Fitzhugh. I am on page 231. I think this chapter was so Funny when Harriet was Spying on her friends and she thought they where cut off her head a hang it on the flag pole. I perdict that Harriet will get cought with her note she worte to Hennessey.

When Harriet was sitting in the park she saw her friends she thought they where nuts but then I thought hey look how's talking Harriet!

Response #3 (O.K.)

I am reading Megan's Island by Willo Davis Roberts. I am on Page 80. I really like this book. The Action is a little slow but I like it. The characters are fabulos.

In this chapter I liked the part when Megan friend ben told that man was looking for two red heads and claimed to be Megan's and Sandy's Uncle. Megan and Sandy are red heads. But they do'nt have an Uncle.

Response #4 (not very good)

I am reading Owls in the family by Farley Mowat. I am on page 13.

I thought it was funny when Bruce and Billy where out in the prairie because they were looking for owls eggs and some crows tesed Bruce and so Bruce climbed the nearst tree and got the crows eggs and put all four in his mouth to carry them down the tree but one branch boonke and Bruce fell three brances down but by then all the eggs in Bruce mouth craked and Bruce tased a whole lot of grose suff in his mount and got a sandwich out of his napsack and eated it to get crow egg out of his mouth.

Karen noted how she had included information about characters, setting and plot in both Response #1 and #2. She also judged Response #1 as "good" because she had compared two books and wrote a 'personal' (i.e. used a starter from the mind map). For Response #2, Karen said, "I tried to make sure I used lots of stuff from my mind map."

Karen evaluated Response #3 as "O.K." as she had "explained quite a bit" and written about characters, setting and plot. To improve this response, she thought she needed to include more information about the setting.

To Karen, Response #4 was "not very good" as she had written solely about the plot. She also remarked on there being only one period in the entire entry. To improve this journal entry, Karen stated she needed to "talk about the setting, characters, [and] how I thought how the author is starting the story off."

Before selecting specific responses to discuss with the researcher, Karen was asked what she thought made a 'good' response. She answered, "Remembering to use periods." When probed for further ideas, she asserted the importance of using the starter sentences from the mind map.

> Things from your response journal--if you used something from your response journal it would be better than just putting it in your own words. Say you were saying I wonder if, if you tried to put it in your own words sometimes it doesn't sound as good as if you were to take it--I wonder if but Megan does not do this. If you use the thing then you get it more clearer to Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw.

Karen's main criteria for evaluating her responses were the incorporation of information about characters, setting and plot, and the usage of starters from the mind map. She also made reference to the importance of punctuation in her entries. Therefore, Karen's guidelines for evaluating her responses were somewhat similar before and after examining her responses. However, in the discussions of every entry, Karen referred to the necessity of including information on plot, setting and character; a feature not mentioned in her earlier description of a 'good' response.

To improve her written responses overall, Karen believed she needed to "explain more about the setting." As well, Karen stated that sometimes she needed to write more about the characters as she felt she got "a little slow on the characters." When probed for further ideas, she mentioned she could write more content.

Teachers' Comments

When reading Response #1, Mrs. Shaw commented, "This is good for her." The teachers observed the length of this particular response was shorter than her usual entries. As well, Mrs. Shaw noted Karen had "a comparison in here, she got a personal in here, [and] I could understand it."

The teachers judged Response #2 as a "good entry for her." They remarked how gaps in Karen's thinking were apparent in this entry. Mrs. Perez explained, "Whenever I write to Karen, I try to fill in some of the things she's missed." The teachers commented on how Karen needed to provide reasons for her thoughts or ideas and avoid retelling the plot.

The teachers judged Response #3 as "all right" as they felt Karen was not "saying a lot." They noted how she had not clearly expressed the importance of a particular part of her entry.

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw concurred with Karen's evaluation of Response #4 as they felt it "was not a good one" as she retold the plot. As well, they discussed how Karen's spelling interfered with their reading of the entry.

> All she did was retell the story--there's nothing there about any kind of response. That's not good...And there's not periods there either.

Thus the teachers' positive comments addressed the use of starters from the mind map and the comprehensibility of Karen's entries. For the particular responses Karen discussed, they noted the need for sufficient content which was both cohesive and comprehensible. As well the teachers stated it was necessary for Karen to avoid retelling the story, to provide reasons or explanations for ideas, and to use correct writing mechanics. Although the teachers' and Karen's overall judgments of the four responses were identical, there were few similarities between the teachers' and Karen's remarks regarding the criteria used to support their evaluations.

The teachers wrote replies to the four responses Karen discussed with the researcher. Overwhelmingly, their comments focused on instructional issues.

> Example 1 - I found this entry somewhat difficult to read because your ending punctuation and capitals to begin new sentences aren't there. I think you forgot to look at your mind map because you basically retold part of the story. There are no predictions, questions, opinions other than the very beginning where you said you thought a part was funny. Please remember to use your mind map, O.K.?

As well, the teachers wrote several evaluative comments, a few personal remarks about the texts, and a few general observations.

> Example 2 - You have made two good responses here, one comparison and one personal. I'll bet your camping trip was a bit different than this story though. Keep up the good work, and try to write a little more each time.

Overall, the teachers believed Karen needed to improve her responses by explaining her thinking. They also expressed concern about the mechanics of her writing interfering with the content of her work. The teachers felt Karen needed to "be more meticulous about what she's writing and reread what she actually has said to see if it's all there--what she wanted. And to see if it's readable."

The teachers were quite surprised by Karen's opinions of the areas requiring improvement in her responses. They acknowledged Karen did not say "a lot about the setting" but felt she was unaware of the more salient aspects needing attention.

> See we like them to respond to plot, setting and character and I think that's what she's talking about but she did talk about some characters in here actually...but there's definitely things more important than that in her case.

Perhaps Karen's suggestions of areas for improvement in her response writing reflected her inaccurate perceptions of herself and her work (i.e. the teachers' comments about her perceptions regarding math and writing). As well, Karen's recommendations may have reflected her attempts to adhere to the directions of the specific response format required by the teachers.

Researcher's Comments

In all of Karen's responses, she expressed her opinions about textual aspects. For Responses #1 and #2 Karen neglected to provide reasons or explanations for her ideas. Response #3 contained 'some' explanations as did Response #4. However, the last response was basically a retelling of a plot event. In the first three entries Karen discussed, she wrote about several different ideas which affected the cohesiveness of her responses. The ideas were related in Response #4 as Karen retold a particular part of the story. The researcher believed the quality of Karen's responses would have been improved with indepth discussions of one or two of the main ideas in her entries. She needed to distance herself from the texts and reflect on her emotional responses to them.

The researcher utilized the classification system developed by Cox and Many (1992b) to determine the stance of the responses (i.e. efferent/aesthetic continuum). Response #4 was primarily efferent as it focused on retelling a section of the text. The researcher discovered that two of Karen's responses contained elements of both aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis (Responses #2 and #3). Karen's other response contained primarily aesthetic responses as selective attention was given to specific parts of a text (Response #1).

Other Information on Response Writing

To Karen, writing responses about the novels she read meant writing "down her feelings about the book" or writing about something she was wondering about. Although Karen did not describe her 'feelings' in many of her entries, she certainly expressed her personal thoughts and opinions about the texts in every response. As well, there was only one instance where Karen wrote about something she was wondering about.

Karen explained she went about writing responses by thinking about things she liked about the book and by using her mind map. She stated, "and that's all I do. I don't really have any special way of writing." When asked where she got the ideas to include in her responses, she replied, "Just from my mind map and from reading the book, that's all." She explained how the mind map provided her assistance with putting her ideas into words. "I have to look through the first page of my response journal and see all the different ideas from the mind map to help put it in words." The researcher questioned Karen if she ever included any of the ideas going through her mind while reading in her responses. She stated, "I use them all--every single response journal I write them all or I try to."

Karen seemed to experience difficulties explaining why she thought her teachers had the students write responses to the books they read. Her answer indicated she thought the responses were a medium to “save their ideas.” She said, “If you're in the middle of the book you can write down stuff and see if your predictions are right or if you haven't figured them out.”

Karen expressed positive feelings about response writing. She stated, “I like it because you can tell people about your writing--you can tell the teacher about what you're thinking about the book.” She felt response writing was a worthwhile activity. Karen explained it was fun because it provided her an opportunity to share her thoughts, to which she could return to later.

> Well you get to share your thoughts and it gives you a place to write down what you thought about the book at the time. Then when you're finished the book, you can go back and see what you thought about the book and if you made predictions then you can go back and look through it and say, “Oh, I made a prediction there and now I found out what the prediction is in here.”

By writing responses, Karen believed she had learned “how to share her thoughts and how to put stuff into words because you've wrotten about it and it gets you good on writing.” When asked what she meant by it “gets you good on writing,” she explained writing responses assisted her with expressing her thoughts when writing stories.

> If you're writing a story, it helps you express your thoughts and stuff in stories. I was writing a response journal and then I had a hard time writing a story I'm writing right now and I needed some way to put this sentence into words so I went back to my response journal and I found something that helped me put that into words.

In addition, Karen noted how she had learned to respond in different ways by using the starters from the mind map. Further, Karen felt writing responses helped her better understand the books she read as writing her ideas clarified her thoughts.

Karen believed some books were easier to write responses about than others. For Karen, those texts which had "more action going on" were easier to write about than those were "there wasn't too much going on." She identified mysteries as easier to write about "because then you have more things to--I wonder if, why was--stuff like that than more of a sad story." Thus to Karen, the development of the plot (and hence emotional engagement) seemed to be a salient factor which affected her opinion of the level of difficulty of response writing.

Karen expressed interest in reading other people's responses as she felt they would provide her an opportunity to "see if they're in the same mind." She also stated she would be able to get ideas by reading other people's responses. According to Karen, her group conversed somewhat about the content of their journal entries on their assigned days to write responses. She said, "We talk to each other and tell about the book and what we're writing about and stuff so it's not all goofy things." Generally she felt her group spent most of their work time writing. However, it appeared to the researcher, that a substantial amount of the conversations occurring in Karen's group were unrelated to the response writing. In particular, two members of Karen's group were often off-task during this activity.

Karen thought group conferences assisted her with her response writing as she was able to discover the thoughts of others which she then could include in her entries.

> Cause then you know what other people think so I can write down, "Megan thinks that Megan's Island is a really good book because so and so and so and I think that too or something.

She also felt her journal entries provided a source of ideas when conferencing with her group. Karen stated she sometimes took an idea written in her response journal about one book and altered it for the current novel being discussed by her group.

> Because if you look from one back, not the same book, but you go back and it says I wonder if Billy in Owls in the Family was strange or something then you take it from that one and read it to the rest of the people in the group but you put Megan instead of Billy or something so you can get different ideas.

In Karen's opinion, the teachers had provided assistance with response writing through lessons where they discussed their expectations for the journal entries. In addition, Karen referred to the initial response all students had copied in their journals. She felt that particular response served as a "guide" and provided assistance "if we're stuck." As well, Karen identified the mind map and the teachers' written comments as helpful. To Karen, the teachers' written comments furnished instructional suggestions. Karen stated if "it says please remember to use your mind map or something so you could remember to do that in your next writing." She also acknowledged how the teachers remarked on the positive aspects of the entries and asked questions to further her thinking. Karen thought there was really nothing more her teachers could do to assist the students write better responses.

The researcher inquired if Karen thought she had responded to books before she came to this class. She enthusiastically answered the question.

> Yes because when I was Mrs. X's class for a book I read I would recite what the summary was and everything to myself and then I'd tell them--I wouldn't tell the plot or anything--I didn't know what plot or any of those were--I'd just say I really liked the action because so and so and I like so and so characters so I really did a book share to the person who I was telling about my book.

She continued her answer by describing how she would think about how she felt about the book while reading. Karen acknowledged how in her head she would respond in the various ways outlined on the mind map but at that time, she was unaware of the specific terms to identify the particular responses. The latter could explain Karen's belief that she had learned how to respond in different ways by writing responses.

Other Aspects of Readers' Workshop

Karen's descriptions of the components of readers' workshop indicated a satisfactory understanding of the procedures and expectations of the program.

On the evaluation sheet for independent conferences 'quality' of responses was one facet the children were to evaluate. Karen expressed some uncertainty about the meaning of this aspect but thought they were to judge how the members hitchhiked on each other's ideas.

> How we respond to other people's ideas or something. I know we're not sure of what it meant...We all had different ideas of what it meant so we all blended them together.

Thus Karen's criterion for evaluating oral responses differed significantly from the guidelines she expressed for judging written responses.

When asked to describe the three types of conferences her group engaged in, Karen acknowledged how her members discussed the same types of general topics in both independent and recorded conferences. She stated her group made predictions, talked about parts they liked, and wondered about aspects of the texts. As well, Karen said, "we tell what was our favourite part, how we reacted to that and any comparisons and stuff." Karen asserted that all her group members used their mind maps (some had memorized the items on it) as it provided them with ideas to discuss. She described a teacher conference as "kind of the same as an independent conference but you tell the teacher what you think and she gives you other ideas and stuff. And she evaluates you." Karen expressed enjoyment of teacher conferences as the teachers posed questions and contributed unique ideas.

Karen stated she liked readers' workshop because it gave her an opportunity to read. She stated the "only reason why I like it is because I get to read." Karen's favourite part of readers' workshop was the reading. She said, "My favourite activity to do any time is to read." To Karen, reading allowed her "to see how different authors write different things and sometimes they [the characters] go into the same things I'm going through and it's just neat to see how they go through it like I'm going through it." If provided the opportunity to change any aspect of readers' workshop, Karen expressed a desire to have more time to read and freedom to choose "how much response writing you want to write."

Interestingly, Karen explained how her mother had initiated a 'home version' of readers' workshop. Karen described how her mother and she both conferenced and wrote responses about the books they read.

Jeannie

Profile

Jeannie's teachers described her as a top achiever in grade four with "superior ability". Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw discussed her level of maturity, noting she was, "mature beyond her years." The teachers also described Jeannie as "very astute" and "very articulate" and mentioned her tendency to dominate her group's conferences. They commented on Jeannie's academic strengths in all subjects. The teachers identified spelling and handwriting as the only areas in which Jeannie did not excel. Mrs. Perez remarked, "Like I say her spelling is not great and her handwriting is terrible but other than that, everything just comes to her." They observed that Jeannie was "one of these kids that you don't have to teach how to read literature because she knows how to read and respond because she has done it since she was born probably."

The teachers also asserted that Jeannie was a perfectionist and quite critical of both herself and others. Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez discussed how the latter had affected Jeannie's relationships with her peers. They noted that Jeannie was a serious student who was "very hard on herself." In addition, Mrs. Shaw explained that "another thing about her character is she has a lot of questions--she wants to know a lot of stuff."

When asked to describe herself as a reader, Jeannie's enthusiastic reply was, "Well, I'm a bookworm!" She described her enjoyment of reading and explained that she liked to read various kinds of books. Jeannie asserted, "I read what I think are good books. I read some ghost stories, some mysteries, some fantasy, some science fiction...Some authors I really like."

Jeannie's initial reaction to the query of describing herself as a writer was, "I'm not a very good writer." She explained, "It takes me a long time to think of something to write. And then I have to figure out a way to start it which is a lot of the trouble I have." She was uncertain why she initially experienced difficulties articulating her thoughts when writing.

The researcher observed Jeannie's group during readers' workshop on multiple occasions. She seemed to be an active participant in her group, making significant contributions in conferences and other activities. At times, Jeannie appeared to dominate the conferences.

The researcher found Jeannie to be an extremely cooperative and articulate student to interview. She appeared to be enthusiastic about participating in the study and seemed to answer the researcher's questions honestly and conscientiously. Jeannie came well prepared to the second interview as she had marked specific responses to discuss with the researcher.

Written Responses

Jeannie selected six entries from her response journal to discuss with the researcher. The responses were chosen from a four month time span. Her journal entries have been reproduced without corrections to spelling and punctuation. Jeannie's assessment of her responses have been indicated in parentheses.

Response #1 (good)

I'm reading The Loon Lake Murders by Robert Sutherland. Today I'm on page 81.

I find this book quite confusing because the author rushes ahead to tell the story and doesn't explain what he said before.

If I were David I'd stay out of this prodickament because I am not that adventurus!

I felt kind of nurvous douring the chase across the lake because I really wanted to know if they would make it across the lake but I havn't found out yet!

Response #2 (good)

I am reading The Loon Lake Murders by Robert Sutherland. I am on page 11.

I wonder who Daved saw with the gun in the forest? I wonder why Austin web said that he was John Smith and that wasn't staying over night like he was but said he was going to Ottawa.

What empressed me about this book was how much setting the author put into just the first chaptor. I predick that when Davids friend from Scotland comes they will figure out who the murder was and how the murder mudered the victom.

Response #3 (good)

I am reading The Doll in the Garden by Mary Downing Hahn. Today I am on page 47.

I wonder who is crying in the night because I don't think that it is just a baby like Ashley's mom says.

I wonder why Ashley thinks Mrs. Cooper is going to take Anna-Marrey away from her. If I were Ashley I wouldent listen to Mrs. Cooper and I would just go in the garden. If I were Ashley I wouldent have ran out to get Anna-Marrey in the middle of the night I would go in the day because Anna-Marrey has allready been out side for a long time it wouldent hert for her to be out a little longer.

Response #4 (good)

I am reading The Doll in the Garden by Mary Downing Hahn. Today I am on page 8.

I wonder why Ms. Cooper doesent like cats at all but she likes her dog. I really want to know why Ms. Cooper keeps most of the Garden but at one end of the garden it all growing wild.

I think that the little thing that Ashley saw was someone who whants to be her friend because shes new in the town.

Response #5 (good)

I am reading Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh. Today I am on page 164.

I can just picture the part where Harriet was spying on the Robbinsons. That statue sounded funny. I liked the part where Mrs. Die Santie caut little Joe Curry stuffing his face with food. and I also liked the part where Fabio said he was a salesman because first Mr. Die Santie was mad but then he was happy.

Response #6 (not one of my best)

I am reading Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh. Today Im on page 249.

I think that this part of the book shows how Harriet wants her friends back to normal but she doesent want to give up her notebook because she doesent seem to be acting normal and shes felling sorry for herself.

I like the part where Harriet was sitting in the park and suddenly the spy catchers club started parading around and the boy with the purple sox was holding the plag pole with his purple sox on the end and he was wearing green green sox.

I hope that at the end of the book Ole Golly comes back or at least visits.

For all the responses Jeannie discussed with the researcher, the mechanical aspects of writing (as opposed to content) were paramount factors affecting her judgments. Jeannie stated that Responses #1, #2, and #3 were neat and that #4 and #5 were good except for the quality of the handwriting. She commented, "Well I did really neat and tidy work here...And so I thought that I did a good job on this. I did a good job except for the neatness." Jeannie discussed spelling correctness for three of the five responses she identified as "good". She observed, "and I didn't have all that many spelling mistakes."

Jeannie noted how she had used some ideas from the mind map in Responses #2, #3 and #4. She remarked, "I think I did a good job--I used some beginnings from the mind map." For Responses #4 and #5, Jeannie mentioned the issue of explaining her ideas. She felt her thoughts were not explained well in entry #4 ("I don't think I explained my ideas very well") but were in entry #5 ("I explained most of my reasons").

In Jeannie's opinion, the main reason Response #6 was not one of her best was because it was messy. She observed, "It was quite messy--I think that is the main reason. I think I explained my responses but didn't do it very neat and tidy."

Thus for Jeannie, aspects of writing mechanics (i.e. conventional spelling and neatness) were the main criteria she employed when evaluating her journal entries. Explaining her thoughts and using starters from the mind map were secondary guidelines Jeannie cited to support the judgments of her responses.

Previous to selecting specific responses to discuss with the researcher, Jeannie was asked what she thought made a 'good' response. She explained a 'good' response would use the beginnings from the mind map; avoid retelling the story; include explanations; and have correct mechanics (spelling, punctuation, and neatness). Therefore, before examining her written responses, Jeannie had cited three of the four reasons she later verbalized as characteristics of a 'good' response. Thus Jeannie's guidelines for evaluating responses were not changed by examination of her responses.

When asked if there was anything Jeannie felt she needed to do to improve her responses overall, her first recommendation was to "write neater." Her second suggestion was to "explain my responses." As well, she mentioned using the mind map beginnings and avoiding retelling the texts. She stated, "Explain and use the beginnings. To explain the things I feel, not to retell the story." Thus Jeannie reiterated the same four aspects she had identified as constituting a 'good' response previous to discussing her responses with the researcher.

Teachers' Comments

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw made many positive observations about Jeannie's responses. They stated she had "a very mature approach to responding" and did a "wonderful job" of writing responses. The teachers articulated that "all of her responses are good responses--it's just that some of them are better than others."

For Response #1, the teachers observed how explicitly Jeannie had identified what was bothering her in the book. They felt the questions Jeannie had posed in her second response did not lend themselves to explanations and noted how Jeannie neglected to include reasons to support her prediction. For Responses #3 and #4, Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw mentioned the questions

Jeannie had queried. They commented how questioning or wondering was 'natural' for Jeannie. Another positive comment the teachers made about Response #4 addressed Jeannie's writing style.

> Mrs. Perez - And then I said she had a nice style of writing her ideas. And she does have a nice style. Like the flow of her writing is really-- makes it interesting to read.

The teachers felt Response #5 was not quite as good as the previous four (which was inconsistent with Jeannie's opinion). They liked her first sentence (a visualization), but pointed out how thereafter she had simply told her favourite part of the book without providing reasons for her opinions.

> Mrs. Shaw - Here she started picking up the idea she had to tell us her favourite part all the time but she ran out of her 20 minutes and that's all she had done.

Response #6, the one Jeannie described as "not one of my best", was judged positively by the teachers as well. They felt the entry was good as Jeannie had included explanations for her ideas.

> Mrs. Shaw - Like this was important because it shows this-- this is why it's in here and I like that part. It may not be the real reason but it's her opinion. I like this real well.

Jeannie had commented upon the messiness of this particular entry and the teachers also mentioned how they experienced difficulties reading the handwriting.

Thus the teachers expressed positive remarks regarding Jeannie's writing style and her attempts to explain her ideas. For the specific entries discussed, the teachers mentioned how Jeannie needed to explain her ideas. As well, for one response, they noted how the handwriting interfered with reading the content of the response. Therefore there was little consistency between the teachers' and Jeannie's opinions of the favourable and less favourable aspects of her journal entries.

The teachers wrote several instructional and evaluative statements in reply to Jeannie's journal entries.

> Example 1 - You are making a real effort to use ideas from the response journal mind map. Often, however, you get into telling the parts you like and then your entry tends to get too much into retelling the story.
>
> Example 2 - You are doing a good job of responding in different ways...Please remember to try to explain and give reasons for everything you say.

As well, when writing in Jeannie's response journal, the teachers articulated their own opinions about issues and made other general comments.

> Example 3 - I think you are a more sensible girl than Ashley is. I believe I wouldn't run out to a garden like Mrs. Cooper's in the middle of the night (unless it were one of my own real babies crying!)
>
> Example 4 - It will be interesting to see if your response will turn out to be correct.

When asked how Jeannie could improve her responses overall, Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw expressed concern with Jeannie's strong emphasis on mechanics. They believed Jeannie needed to concentrate on the content of her work.

> Mrs. Shaw - Start focusing on what she's writing and get away from the neatness and the spelling.
> Mrs. Perez - The thing we need to work on is like you say-- focus on how well you're doing. Look at what you're writing.

The researcher read Jeannie's transcripts of her discussions of her responses to the teachers and they were astounded by Jeannie's fixation with the mechanical aspects of the entries.

> Mrs. Shaw - She's not even looking at all at what she's saying, is she?

> Like that's totally unimportant to her.
> Mrs. Perez - Because you know why? That's probably been the only thing that any teacher has ever been able to find that is not absolutely marvelous and because you feel obliged to suggest some area of improvement--on probably everyone of her report cards--that's what we've put too so we had better stop.

In their written replies to Jeannie's responses, both teachers had commented on 'good' things about the content of her work and had only twice mentioned a mechanical aspect of writing. However, the central focus of the responses for Jeannie was not on content; it was on mechanics.

Researcher's Comments

All of Jeannie's responses, to some extent, contained unrelated main ideas. Thus the journal entries seemed disjointed. She had several interesting ideas but needed to pursue the latter and write more about her initial thoughts. Five of Jeannie's journal entries required reasons or examples or explanations to support her opinions or views. The researcher believed that Jeannie needed to reflect on her emotional involvement with the texts. As she distanced herself from her reading and examined her affective responses to the texts, further explanations or examples would have extended the depth of her journal entries.

The researcher utilized the classification system developed by Cox and Many (1992b) to determine the stance of the responses (i.e. efferent/aesthetic continuum). The researcher discovered that three of Jeannie's responses contained elements of both aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis (Responses #1, #2 and #6). Jeannie's other three responses contained primarily aesthetic responses where selective attention was given to specific parts of texts (Responses #3, #4 and #5).

Other Information on Response Writing

To Jeannie, to write a response to a book meant writing about things she liked in the book and using starters from the mind map.

> I write things I liked about the book and I try to use these (refers to mind map) because I'm not very strong at writing in them. I sometimes retell the story which I don't like--I don't try to but I just sort of do.

Inspection of her responses indicated that Jeannie had expressed her opinions of the texts and had used starters from the mind map in many of her entries.

Jeannie explained she used ideas from her last day's reading to include in her responses. As well, she stated, "I write stuff 'I like', 'If I were so and so I would have', stuff like that--comparisons, criticisms, predictions, opinions and stuff like that I write." Jeannie acknowledged that she referred to the mind map for assistance with ideas to include in her journal entries. She also discussed how she sometimes asked questions about the book and used ideas she was thinking about while reading in her entries. When questioned how she selected which ideas to write about, she answered, "Well, if I'm wondering something, I sometimes put that. If I have a prediction, what I think is going to happen, maybe to that wonder...I say some things I really liked in the book and why I liked them."

Jeannie believed her teachers had the students write responses to the novels they read to discover what the books were about (if they had not read them). She also felt response writing allowed the teachers "to see if we understand [the novels]. They also like to know what we think about the books."

When asked to communicate her feelings about response writing, Jeannie discussed how she usually experienced a "lot of difficulty" writing responses and did not really enjoy it.

> I'm not very good at it. And I'm not very good at getting the ideas to write down. So I get the best I can. I guess that's sort of the reason I retell the story--because I don't know what to write...Sometimes I find it difficult to put my thoughts into words. How to write it down without retelling the story.

Jeannie reiterated her concern about "getting ideas to write about" in further conversation and repeated her previous explanation that she got ideas by referring to the mind map and thinking about what she had read.

Jeannie felt that response writing was a worthwhile activity because "sometimes it clears up your feelings and you understand the book more after you've written it down." Jeannie stated she had learned some writing structure by writing responses. When asked to elaborate on her meaning of "writing structure" she explained, "Well proper form for certain kinds...like I learned where to indent and stuff. Some more of where to use capitals and punctuation." When probed for more information, Jeannie asserted she had learned it was difficult to write responses about books where "not much was happening."

Jeannie felt some books were easier to write responses about than others.

> If I really have a lot going through my mind when I'm reading it and this chapter is really packed, I might have a lot to say but if this chapter is really just sort--not much is going on that we read--then I might not have as much to say and I might not have as good as responses.

She identified The Doll in the Garden as an easy book to respond to because she felt it was really interesting. Jeannie thought The Loon Lake Murders was more difficult to respond to because the text contained repetitious events and 'gaps' which required further explanations.

> A lot of chapters were the same as the one before--some chapters just

> sort of carried on what was in the other chapter and they just should have almost been one chapter...And sometimes the author didn't explain things that happened before and just wanted to race on to stuff later than that.

Similarly, Jeannie thought Harriet the Spy was difficult to respond to at times because "the same thing was happening near the end of the book." She stated, "So sometimes not much new happened so it was kind of hard to write for that." Thus Jeannie seemed to indicate she found it easier to write responses about texts with fast moving plots.

On her group's scheduled days to write responses, Jeannie explained how they might review the events of their last day's reading during the group meeting. She discussed how the responses were to be written individually.

> We're suppose to do this by ourselves and not put down the same stuff that the other people do so we put our personal stuff. So we won't all have written exactly the same and it's kind of boring then and we're not suppose to.

When the researcher observed Jeannie's group writing responses, little, if any, talking occurred. The group members were on task and worked industriously on their journal entries.

Jeannie thought it would be worthwhile to read those peers' responses who had "been doing readers' workshop for awhile and really had the feel of writing responses." By reading other students' journal entries, Jeannie felt she could glean ideas to include in her responses and "get more of a feel of how I could improve my writing."

In Jeannie's opinion, there was a reciprocal relationship between group conferences and response writing. She acknowledged how she used the content of some of her responses to discuss in conferences. As well, Jeannie noted how she incorporated points from her group's discussions in her journal entries.

> Sometimes something that other people think of in the conference, you can write about in your response journal. But in your response journal, you can look through and say some of your points that you wrote for the conference.

When asked how Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw had helped her with her response writing, Jeannie expounded upon the guidance and feedback provided in the teachers' replies to her journal entries. She described how the teachers would remark on both the positive points and the areas requiring improvement in her responses. As well, Jeannie described how the teachers might offer their opinions about something she had written.

> Well, when we hand it in, they write to us and say what we are doing at it and they sort of say stuff about what we wrote and give their opinion to that. They sometimes say that we're sort of retelling the story and could we try and explain what you're saying.

She stated she tried to follow the teachers' suggestions and sometimes she responded to the teachers' comments.

Jeannie felt there was nothing more the teachers could do to assist her with response writing. She asserted that the responsibility was hers. "I think this [write neater, explain ideas, avoid retelling, and use mind map starters] is something that I really have to do myself."

When asked if Jeannie thought she knew how to respond to books before coming to Mrs. Shaw's and Mrs. Perez's classroom, she replied affirmatively but qualified her answer. "Well not really in the same way. I didn't respond with such depth. Right now I respond more deeply and before I just said, 'I like that book' or 'It's really a good book' or something." Jeannie explained responding "more deeply" meant to "explain my responses and say things more into the story, not just on the surface." Through further questioning, Jeannie acknowledged how previous to being in this class, she had responded in all the ways outlined on the mind map but was unaware of the specific terms used to identify each type of response.

Other Aspects of Readers' Workshop

Jeannie articulated accurate descriptions of the various components of and expectations for readers' workshop.

On the evaluation sheet for independent conferences, the students were to evaluate the 'quality' of their responses. Jeannie explained 'quality' of oral responses meant using the mind map, expressing feelings, clearing up misunderstandings, and staying on topic. She described lower quality responses as "saying stuff that didn't matter or retelling the story." Therefore, there was some overlap in Jeannie's opinions of 'quality' oral responses and 'good' written responses as both would avoid retelling the story and use starters from the mind map.

In describing the three types of conferences her group participated in, Jeannie noted the similarities between independent and recorded conferences. She explained how her group "talked about the same things"--"about points in the book and say our feelings about it and try to use some of the things from the mind map for beginnings. And try to clear up points that we don't understand." Jeannie stated she used the mind map to assist her with saying what she wanted and to give her a "good start" with her ideas. Jeannie likened a teacher conference to a recorded conference but "you don't record it because the teacher is right there to listen and she evaluates it as we are going along. Not like if we recorded it, she would evaluate it after." She expressed mixed feelings about teacher conferences. Jeannie stated she enjoyed teacher conferences if the teachers had read the book the group was discussing because then the teachers could "join in and it's kind of fun that way." When the teachers had not read the book, Jeannie expressed some frustration as the group had "to explain a lot more and we don't always get as far in the conference as we would have if she had read it or was reading it."

Jeannie stated she liked readers' workshop as she was able to read. As well, she enjoyed setting her own reading goals and discussing the texts with her group members.

> I like how you get to read and you don't have to read a certain amount that the teacher assigns, you get to with your group, decide how much you can read and then decide. If something isn't clear, it isn't like reading a book on your own, if there's something you're not able to understand, you can talk to your group members about it.

Jeannie also noted how working in groups during readers' workshop had exposed her to new books that she may not have selected independently.

> Well sometimes you think, "Oh that's not my type of book." But then when you start reading, it's really good. And you get to know authors that you didn't know about before that write really good books.

Jeannie identified "the reading" as her favourite part of readers' workshop. If provided the opportunity to change any aspect of readers' workshop, Jeannie stated she would add more reading time. When asked to explain why she would like additional time to read, Jeannie exclaimed, "I really like reading--it's fun to do. You learn from reading. And ... I like reading!"

Kevin

Profile

The teachers described Kevin as a very weak (academic) student in grade 5 who was immature for his age. They noted how Kevin experienced problems staying on task and had difficulties remembering what he learnt.

> He learns something and then it's gone. Real fast. He works very well with the concrete--things need to be explained to him in an extremely concrete manner--and when you get away from that, he starts to lose it...he can do it but when you come back to that again--you know the only way he can remember that is to remind him of the concrete steps that he went through...He's definitely held back by his lack of being able to remember things.

They felt Kevin wanted to do well and was concerned about his work. "But he wants to do well--he'll ask you for help--he has a real sense of caring." The teachers stated that "things were difficult" for Kevin in both math and language arts. In grades 2 and 3, Kevin had received resource room assistance. In April of grade 5, Kevin had an opportunity to once again receive learning assistance but he declined the offer. The teachers believed Kevin was very proud and realized his limitations but did not want other people to be cognizant of the latter.

When asked to describe himself as a reader, Kevin stated, "When I read I think about it while I'm reading and I like reading--well sometimes I like reading and sometimes I may not like the author." Kevin felt he was a 'good' reader because he read at his own pace and did not "try to read as fast as everyone else." He told the researcher he liked to read books with lots of action and humour - "kind of like Bugs Potter books and Bruno and Boots." Kevin also mentioned Matt Christopher as an author he enjoyed as he felt Christopher wrote "good sports books."

Kevin stated that "sometimes" he was a good writer. He discussed how at times he neglected to include specific aspects in his responses; information which he knew should be addressed. As well, he mentioned how he periodically experienced difficulties getting his thoughts onto paper.

> Well cause like here you are when you're reading it over--"Well how come I didn't tell anything about setting or anything like that?"...And here you are thinking for a real long time and then you got them [ideas] and then you go to write and it's like where have they all gone?

Kevin acknowledged that he 'borrowed' ideas from books he read to include in his own stories. He stated he found it easier to write responses than stories because "if you're writing a big story, it would take you longer and if you were writing a response, you don't have to put in as much detail and chapter pages and stuff like that."

It seemed that Kevin made a genuine effort to answer all of the researcher's questions. He seemed to enjoy speaking with the researcher about the various aspects of readers' workshop. At times, there were discrepancies between Kevin's statements and the researcher's observations of his class behaviours. Kevin's answers indicated he was cognizant of what he should do; but in actuality, he did not or perhaps could not demonstrate the behaviours and skills he articulated to the researcher. The teachers concurred with the latter observations stating that, "He just can't. He just doesn't have the maturity and the skills."

Written Responses

From a time period of four months, Kevin selected five responses to discuss with the researcher. Kevin's assessments of his journal entries have been indicated in parentheses. No corrections have been made to his responses reproduced below.

Response #1 (pretty good)

I am reading Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh. I am on page 180.
In this chapter Harriet got caugh in the dum waiter then got through out of the house by Mrs. Plumber. I think that Harriet should have been more carefull.

Response #2 (pretty good)

I am reading Sixth grde Sleepover by eve bunting.
I predict that the sleepover will be a desaster. I also think that one reads the whole time and when there sleeping pebbles will pebble all over them. I like the part when pebbles pebble all over.

Response #3 (O.K.)

We are reading Sixth grad Sleepover, by Eve Bunting. We are on page 30.
I think that there will be a pillowfight at the sleepover. I wonder if pebbles will run away on the sleepover? I also think that pebbles might all the food and get into someones backpack and the person will not notes and take it home and then when that person will open there backpack and he hop out.

Response #4 (not really good)

I am reading Bugs Potter live at Nickaninny. by Gordon korman. I am on page 80.
I like the prat when bugs wa at the Muezein and th fond a boy crying

Response #5 (bad)

We are reading live at Nickaninny by Gordon korman. We are on page 40.
I like the part when bugs made his drms. I wonder if bats and rats will wreck his drum. I do not like the prat when bugs had to guit druming.

Kevin thought Response #1 was "pretty good" because he had explained his ideas "pretty well" had "told why." To Kevin, Response #2 was also "pretty good" because he had predicted what he thought would happen in the book and had "explained about some of the characters." He felt he could improve both of these responses by writing about "more than one thing."

Kevin described Response #3 as "O.K." because he had explained his ideas. Conversely, Response #4 was judged "not really good" by Kevin as he stated he needed to "explain my ideas a little better." As well, he said he had "only talked about one thing" in his fourth response and needed to "put some more things of the book" to improve that particular entry.

Kevin evaluated Response #5 as "bad" because he did not explain his ideas and "didn't tell about the setting or anything or the other characters." He felt he could have improved this response by not having "one sentence and then go to a totally different sentence. Like stick on the same sentence for a little while and explain my ideas better."

Thus for Kevin, the most salient feature of a 'good' response was explanation of ideas. He also noted the importance of responding in various ways (i.e. to talk about more than one idea).

In the first interview with the researcher, previous to selecting specific entries to discuss, Kevin stated a 'good' response needed to include content about setting, characters and plot. He referred to one or all of these elements in three of his discussions of his journal entries. Kevin also mentioned "you got to tell why" in a 'good' response. Again this was a main criterion Kevin employed when discussing he responses. All of Kevin's comments about his responses, whether judged favourably or not, focused on content. Even though the mechanics of writing were clearly a weak area for Kevin, he did not address this aspect.

When questioned how he thought he could improve his responses overall, Kevin replied, "I can put in more detail and I can give two reasons why."

His remarks were consistent with his opinions of the salient features of a 'good' response articulated earlier in the interview.

Teachers' Comments

After reading Response #1, both teachers asserted, "For him, that's a good entry." They observed that in this particular response, Kevin had included "ideas that weren't straight retelling the plot" and had "managed to get the format." Mrs. Perez stated that "for Kevin, that's a good strong entry." Mrs. Shaw discussed how the mechanics of writing require a large portion of Kevin's time and "he doesn't get time to do too many thoughts."

The teachers noted how Kevin had not explained his ideas in Response #2. Mrs. Shaw asserted, "He is weak at explaining his answers so of course that is missing in most of them but it's not a bad entry." The teachers were surprised by Kevin's articulation that he had explained about the characters in this response. Mrs. Shaw commented, "I don't see where he really talked about the characters. And he thought he did?"

The researcher neglected to have the teachers discuss Response #3. However Mrs. Perez wrote a reply to this particular entry and complimented Kevin on the effort he had put forth on that day.

> You've done a good job on your response journal today. I like the way you made some predictions and asked a question. This is the kind of response you can make near the beginning of the book. I can tell from the way you have written that you really focused on what you were doing during working time and you worked hard. Your effort shows!

The teachers described Response #4 as "not as good as his other ones" and noted how he had not explained why he liked the particular part he mentioned. The researcher read Kevin's comments to the teachers about how he thought he could have improved this response. Upon hearing that Kevin thought he needed to explain his ideas better, Mrs. Shaw responded, "And explain them, right. Good. He's got that idea down then."

Kevin judged Response #5 as "bad" but the teachers stated it was "good for him." Mrs. Shaw said, "You know he doesn't explain his answers very well but he manages to get some thoughts down." Mrs. Perez noted how Kevin experienced similar difficulties explaining his ideas when communicating orally and stated, "I don't think the thoughts are there in terms of why or how." Both teachers discussed how cooperative work had been highly beneficial for Kevin as he was quite adept at hitchhiking onto others' opinions and 'borrowing' ideas.

Thus the teachers positively remarked on Kevin's efforts to avoid retelling the story, to incorporate ideas from the mind map, and to utilize the correct format in his entries. For the specific responses discussed, the teachers noted the need for Kevin to explain his ideas or thoughts, to use starters from the mind map and to improve his mechanics. Therefore, there were few commonalities between the particular features of Kevin's responses, both favourable and unfavourable, identified by the teachers and those discussed by Kevin.

The comments written to Kevin by Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw consisted of instructional suggestions or questions, and evaluative remarks. Their feedback seemed to be directed at providing Kevin with information about both positive aspects and areas requiring improvement in his responses.

> Example 1 - What was it about this part of the story you found appealing? You are still not explaining your opinions in your journal entries. I know you can do it because I have heard you in your conferences.

> Example 2 - Why do you think the sleepover will be a disaster? Also, you don't really explain what is so important about Pebbles pebbling all over.

The teachers felt it was imperative for Kevin to stay on task and concentrate when writing his responses. As well, they thought his responses could be improved if he would try to explain his ideas. Mrs. Shaw stated, "Well he can try to--even if he puts the 'because' in there he's got to think of something."

Researcher's Comments

In all of Kevin's responses, he expressed his opinions about the novels he was reading. In only one response did Kevin include an explanation to support his opinion, even though he felt he had explained his ideas in other instances. Four of his responses contained limited content. As well, there were unrelated ideas his journal entries. The researcher felt the quality of Kevin's responses would have been improved if he had selected one main idea to write about and reflected on his emotional involvement with the texts to extend his discussion.

The researcher utilized the classification system developed by Cox and Many (1992b) to determine the stance of the responses (i.e. efferent/aesthetic continuum). The researcher discovered that four of Kevin's responses contained elements of both aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis (Responses #1, #2, #4 and #5). Kevin's other response contained primarily aesthetic responses where selective attention was given to specific parts of a text (Response #3).

Other Information on Response Writing

When asked what it meant to Kevin to write responses to the books he read, he replied, "writing to Mrs. Shaw about what you think what you're reading and you think what you're writing and like you understand the book more." He continued stating that he wrote about his favourite and least favourite parts, and any criticisms he had of the book in his entries. In all of Kevin's responses, he articulated his opinion about some textual aspect(s) he had read.

Kevin explained he went about writing a response by thinking about both what he had read in the book and from the discussions with his other group member. He stated he used some of the ideas going through his mind while reading. When asked how he selected which ideas to write about Kevin replied, "Well I start out usually with my favourite and then I kind of go with funny parts and then kind of like the plot, setting." He asserted he tried to include information on plot, setting and characters in his responses. Kevin admitted that at the beginning of the year he frequently used ideas from the mind map to assist him with his response writing but no longer referred to the mind map very often.

Kevin felt the teachers had the students write responses to discover each individual's thoughts about the texts. He also thought the teachers wanted the students to think more about what happened in the books and used response writing as a vehicle to promote extended thinking.

Kevin indicated he liked response writing because it provided him an opportunity to "write down all" of his ideas and it was fun. He expressed relief that the teachers no longer assigned a numerical mark to the responses because he felt the score had become the focal point. He articulated that writing responses was a worthwhile activity because he was able to learn more about the books by writing about them. As well, Kevin believed response writing helped him to better understand the novels he read as writing enhanced his memory of textual events.

From response writing, Kevin believed he had learned that writing his ideas assisted him to better understand the books he read.

> I've probably learned what I'm reading better cause when you're writing response journals, then you know it, then you're thinking what you're reading--like when you're reading, you just like try to read and get your goal over with and then when you're writing response journals, you actually think about it a lot more.

Kevin was of the opinion that some books were easier to write responses about than others. He identified those texts with more action and details as easier to respond to because he felt there was more 'content' in those types of books to write about. Kevin also explained how the "wording" of a novel affected ease of responding because for him "books that are hard to understand" were harder to write responses about.

According to Kevin, on his scheduled days to write responses, his partner and he would talk about the book at the beginning of the work time "and then when we're writing we might tell one another ideas if one of us isn't doing very good." Kevin acknowledged that his partner and he talked "lots" and "sometimes" they talked about the content of their responses. Kevin stated they usually talked about the funny parts of the books and that they often got off topic. The researcher's observations indicated that very little of the conversations occurring in Kevin's group on response writing day were related to the content of the journal entries and/or the text.

Kevin stated he would like to read other people's responses as he could get "lots" of ideas from their entries. As well, if the individuals had read the same book, Kevin felt he could ascertain if "they had the same response as you then you know that you're right."

Kevin felt there was a reciprocal relationship between conferencing and response writing. He stated he used ideas from his response journal to discuss in his conferences. As well, Kevin acknowledged he used ideas discussed in his conferences in his journal entries.

> Lots cause like when me and Student X talk about something you might not have really thought that that was your favourite idea but you still might put that down.

When asked how the teachers had assisted the class with their response writing, Kevin mentioned the initial response all students had copied into their journals. As well, he discussed how the teachers' mini-lessons on response writing had been helpful. Kevin felt the teachers' comments to his responses helped as "then you know how you can improve." Kevin believed the teachers had taught him "a lot" and he felt there was nothing else they could do to help him with his response writing.

The researcher inquired if Kevin thought he had responded to books in his head before he came to this class. He answered, "Yeah because like when I'm reading a book at home and then I go downstairs and my mom always asks, 'So what was it about?' and stuff and I kind of tell her and I think while I'm telling her." Through further questioning, using hypothetical comments a reader might make about a text and by making reference to the mind map, Kevin indicated he had been responding to books in various ways before he was in this class. Kevin acknowledged that previously, he had been unaware of the specific terms used to identify the particular responses he had been experiencing.

Other Aspects of Readers' Workshop

Kevin's descriptions of the procedures for and expectations of each component of readers' workshop indicated a satisfactory understanding of the program.

Kevin was asked to explain the meaning of the phrase 'quality' of responses on the evaluation sheet for independent conferences. He indicated it was necessary to respond in more than one way (e.g. My favourite part was...) and to provide detail in the responses. When asked if stating, "My favourite part was where _____" was a quality response he replied, "No. Like you would have to tell why it's your favourite part and stuff." Thus there were similarities between the criteria Kevin specified for his written responses and those he described for 'quality' oral responses (i.e. explanations and various responses).

The researcher asked Kevin to describe the three types of conferences he engaged in during readers' workshop. In independent conferences, Kevin stated his partner and he discussed their "favourite parts and the answers to the questions that you just maybe thought and...like questions and what you think about the book and what I think about the book...and we talk about what we read." Kevin acknowledged that his partner and he stayed on topic more when engaging in recorded conferences. The general topics of discussion in recorded conferences were similar to those Kevin listed for independent conferences. Kevin described a teacher conference as

> There's a teacher there listening to you and you're telling her but you're with your group and she might ask you questions about the book and if she has read it then she might--like if you say a comment then she might say, "Yeah, I agree with that."

Kevin expressed enjoyment of teacher conferences because he liked working with the teachers "cause they make it funner" and were other individuals to converse with. The researcher inquired if the teachers articulated ideas that Kevin had not previously considered and he replied, "Yeah. A lot." Kevin stated he used his mind map during recorded and teacher conferences because he wanted to do "his best" in those situations.

Approximately two-thirds way through the research project, the teachers strongly encouraged the students to write down their ideas or thoughts in the backs of their journals while they were reading. The teachers felt this strategy would provide a source of content to discuss during conferences and to refer to when writing responses. Kevin believed writing down ideas at the back of his journal was helpful as he could refer to the ideas and "then if you're thinking of something and you look at that again and then you can think of how you should put it." He also felt the points would provide him content for discussion in the conferences. Kevin stated he wished he had been writing down points at the back of his journal since the beginning of the year as he felt this practice was beneficial.

Kevin stated he liked readers' workshop because he was able to select his own books to read and did not have to "go through a reader and read out loud." As well, he asserted that "you read a lot more from readers' workshop too because when you're going through those readers, you just read and then the teacher doesn't ask you why you liked that part." Recorded conferences and book celebrations were Kevin's favourite parts of readers' workshop because he liked being recorded on tape and viewed celebrations as fun. If provided the opportunity to change any aspect of readers' workshop, Kevin would "like more time to read [and] maybe a little more time on work time."

Theodore

Profile

Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw described Theodore as a very bright, energetic and interesting fifth grade student. They felt Theodore was a "bit arrogant with his brightness" as he considered "a lot of what goes on in school beneath him. And he just kind of tolerates it." They discussed Theodore's lack of adherence to 'rules' but noted the latter was due to his spontaneity rather than conscious defiance. Mrs. Perez remarked that Theodore's "area of weakness really is his social skills" and both teachers commented on his temper. Although observed to be a "bully" at times, the teachers also noted that Theodore was a very sensitive young man.

The teachers discussed Theodore's academic abilities and explained he was "bright all the way around." On several occasions they mentioned his intellectual strengths. Mrs. Perez stated, "he could go a long way...I really hope he gets to go to some type of University--I mean his mind has so much potential." The teachers remarked that although his writing was "pretty sharp", his reading was still stronger or "far above his writing" and oral communication abilities. Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw acknowledged Theodore's appetite for content area literature, observing that science was his "passion". They felt Theodore's work was adversely affected by his lack of concentration and commitment to work to his potential.

When asked to describe himself as a reader, Theodore expressed his enjoyment of reading and stated that he "read a lot in his spare time." He discussed the quantity of books he had read and explained how all the members of his family were avid readers. With pride, Theodore communicated how "in grade 3 there were these Scholastic tests and for this reading thing across the country, 100 kids qualified and I came in eleventh." Theodore articulated that he was "into nonfiction books. Like I really like U.F.O. books and stuff like that."

When asked to describe himself as a writer, Theodore expressed some ambivalence about his writing abilities. He reported difficulties in generating ideas for stories.

> Well some stories--I can write better after--if I have something to write about. Like say I have to think it off the top of my head--that's not one of my strong points. But I've done it a couple of times. Like I write a lot better if I have something to write about--like this book.

Theodore asserted that he found writing responses easier than writing stories because the novels provided him content to write about and he was writing to someone, not just to himself. (The latter was an interesting insight into Theodore's perception of 'audience' when writing stories.)

From observations of Theodore's group during readers' workshop, it was clear that he was the leader. He spoke the most during conferences and encouraged others to contribute and express their ideas or opinions. Theodore often was the spokesperson for his group (when one was required) and his ideas were frequently used for various group activities.

Theodore was very articulate during the interviews and seemed to be very relaxed when speaking with the researcher. Theodore seemed to enjoy conversing with the researcher as he freely and openly expressed his opinions and thoughts. He came well prepared to the second interview as he had reread all of his responses and written an evaluative comment beside each.

Written Responses

From a four month time period, Theodore chose seven responses to discuss with the researcher. His assessments of the responses have been indicated in parentheses. No corrections have been made to the reproduced journal entries below.

Response #1 (good)

Today I am reading Harriet the spy by Louise fitzhugh. Today I am on page 143.

I found it interesting the way Mr. Welsh used the work 'fink' when he came home from work. It was also really interesting when Harriet's mother came in and was saying how much she liked math when Harriet hated it. My mom enjoy's math also and I really hate it!!

I think the author could have made some of the sentences more interesting and more understanding, and also the setting could have been in more place's.

Response #2 (good)

Today I am reading Harriet the spy by Louise fitzhugh. Today I am on page 222.

I found this chapter quite funny because of when Harriet got all the ink dumped on her. I think the cook is rather a grumpy person. I find it quite interesting the way the cook talks to Harriet in front of her parents and they just there and read their paper! You'ed think they'ed do something about it!

Response #3 (good)

Today I am reading Harriet the spy by Louise fitzhugh. Today I am on page 298 (end).

The last chapter was the best one in the book. I liked the part when Harriet was pretending to be a mug. It was also nice when she was watching the tugboat and Sport and Janie made up with Harriet. That was my favorite one.

Response #4 (good)

I am reading Eddies Blue winged dragon by C.S. Adler. I am on page 22.

Eddies blue winged dragon is an exellent book, even for the second time. It has just enough action and no boring parts! I liked the way the book started. Some books start by telling the plot, whats happening ect. and by the time any action gets in, the book is done. Another thing that caught my eye was the cover. Although we're not very far, we know alot about it.

Response #5 (not too great)

I am reading Eddies blue winged dragon by C. S. Adler. Today I am on page 134.

Now this was probably favorite chapter. In chapters 9, 10, and 11, there has being more and more action. In chapter's 9 and 10 there was a forest fire, a contest on "why I love books" and the teachers broken foot. Now, if all books had more action like this, theyd all be best sellers.

Response #6 (bad)

Today I am reading Harriet the spy by Louis Fitzhugh. I am on page 245.

I think that todays chapter had more action than others. One exsample is when Janie got mad at Harriet when she spilled the beaker on the floor and when sports father sold the book. Id think that Jainie would be nicer!

Response #7 (bad)

I am reading my teacher is alien. I am on page 70.

I am glad that susan found mrs. Schwartz. I am wonder how mrs. Smith got her into the forcefield? How will susan get her out?

My favorite part is when Duncan and peter got into a fight, and mr. Smith just picked them up.

For the first three responses Theodore judged as "good", he articulated that he had "explained his answers." He felt that Response #2 was also good because there were few spelling mistakes. Theodore stated Responses #3 and #4 were good because he had avoided retelling the story and he had written about more than one part of the book. He observed, "I didn't write about one part, I wrote about some others. I kind of explained my answer a bit. And I didn't put one that kind of told about the book a bit."

Theodore judged Response #5 as "not too great" because it lacked content and explanation of ideas. He stated, "Well, I didn't think it was too great because I didn't really explain many of my answers...It wasn't too long, it was only half a page."

Mechanical aspects affected Theodore's judgment of Response #6. He commented that this particular response contained "scribbled out" parts, messy handwriting and spelling mistakes. Theodore also felt this journal entry was "bad" as he had retold part of the text and written about only one part of the book.

> I scribbled out a lot and it was kind of messy and I made a couple of spelling mistakes. I kind of retold the story a lot and I didn't say much more. Because it was just about one part and nothing else.

Theodore believed Response #7 was "bad" because an individual would have needed to read the book to understand his entry, implying further explanation was required in this response. He stated, "like you would have had to read the book at first to know what I am talking about really."

Thus Theodore's justifications for his judgments of his responses were very consistent as the reasons he articulated for the responses judged less favourably were the opposites of those describing the 'good' responses. Theodore used the following criteria to evaluate his responses: explanations for his opinions; quantity of content; discussion about more than one part of the text; retellings; and writing mechanics.

Before Theodore examined his written responses and selected some to discuss with the researcher posed the question, "In your opinion, what makes a 'good' response?" Theodore mentioned several criteria for a response to be judged as 'good'.

Theodore - A good response should be something like you're not

> retelling the book as I said before and it shouldn't be really short and it shouldn't recopy like what you said all the time. Like it said at the beginning of how you should use different responses each time--you shouldn't just say, "I like this part, I like that part"...
> Researcher - If I wrote,"I like this part because it's funny" would that be a good response?
> Theodore - I don't think so--I think you should write about the part a bit. Explain your answer.

Therefore, previous to examining his written responses, Theodore had cited four of the five reasons he later verbalized as criteria when judging his responses. Thus Theodore's guidelines for evaluating responses were not altered by perusal of his entries.

When asked about improving his responses in general, Theodore stated that he needed to write about characters or settings in the books. He explained how he had a tendency to "dwell on one thing" in his responses. Theodore stated, "...on most of my parts you see that I say something about the action in the book. And maybe I should go on to something different, like maybe the characters for a change or the setting." He also admitted that he was "not the neatest writer."

Teachers' Comments

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez discussed how Theodore's phrasing positively contributed to their judgment of Response #1. Mrs. Shaw commented, "Actually you know as an entry, it's not bad...I like the way he phrases some of this."

The teachers stated that Response #2 was "a good response too" thus implying they believed Response #1 to be good (as they read #1 and #2 consecutively). They noted thatTheodore had included a few repetitious phrases in this second response but generally, they found the entry 'flowed'.

> Mrs. Shaw - Basically it's a good response again because it flows. He's one of those that there's no formula writing in his work. All the things are there--the comparisons, the--but it--other than a few repetitious phrases that he likes to use.

Although Theodore evaluated Response #3 as "good", the teachers described it as not one of his best efforts and felt he had needed to include more explanations to support his opinions and ideas.

> Mrs. Perez - I think this response isn't one of his best.
> Mrs. Shaw - It's so-so. Again, I would have liked a little bit more of the 'why' part...he hasn't really explained what he's trying to say.

The teachers judged Response #4 as good and commented positively on the content of the entry. Mrs. Shaw stated, "This is excellent...He's got quite a bit of different stuff in there...Yeah, I like that one. It's a good one, I think."

Again for Response #5 ("not too great"), the teachers mentioned Theodore's syntax (i.e. phrasing) as a positive point. They felt the substance of Theodore's entry was fine but expressed concern about the quantity of content.

> Mrs. Perez - He really phrases his ideas well...
> Mrs. Shaw - He just needed to say more as an entry. There was nothing wrong with what was here. I just think it needed more.

Theodore, too, had remarked on the lack of content of this entry but had not expressed any favourable comments about this response.

Theodore judged Response #6 as "bad" and the teachers concurred, stating that this entry was not as good as others he had written. They felt the response lacked content (quantity). In addition, they believed Theodore had lost his concentration when writing the last part of the entry.

> Mrs. Shaw - ...I wasn't quite as impressed with this one and...part of it is just length. I don't think he kept his mind--if he would have kept going it probably would have turned into a real good one.
> Mrs. Perez - Yeah, he lost the--he lost his momentum here.

Interestingly, they made no reference to the mechanical aspects of this response as Theodore had.

The teachers disagreed with Theodore's evaluation of Response #7. They did not judge this entry as "bad" but acknowledged that he had indeed written better responses. The teachers favourably evaluated the questions Theodore had posed in this particular entry but noted he had needed to provide explanations to support his ideas and opinions.

> Mrs. Shaw - I wish when he tells his favourite part, he would tell why it's his favourite part--he has a habit of just saying that and not the why. I like some of the questions he had up here. I wouldn't say this was bad--but again, he has done better. But I wouldn't say it was bad, would you?
> Mrs. Perez - Nope.

Thus for the specific responses selected by Theodore, the teachers' positive comments addressed the phrasing and flow of his entries (aspects not mentioned by Theodore). They also identified those instances where he had incorporated explanations for his ideas and opinions and used a variety of responses. For the particular entries discussed, the teachers noted the need for Theodore to write sufficient content and include more explanations for his opinions. Therefore there was substantial overlap between the teachers' and Theodore's opinions of the favourable and less favourable aspects of his written responses.

Most of the comments Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez wrote in reply to the seven responses Theodore discussed were evaluative.

> Example 1 - I am really pleased with how well you are responding to what you have read. However, I feel today's effort was not nearly as good. Maybe you didn't make good use of your time. Please do your best work always! You do so well!

A few personal and general statements were also included in the teachers' comments.

> Example 2 - I take it you have read this book before. I hope you get a new insight into it by discussing it with your friends as you read it. I agree with you that it has a catchy cover.

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez suggested that overall, Theodore's responses could be improved by: consistently explaining the reasons for his ideas and opinions; concentrating on his work; and writing his responses in the correct format.

> Mrs. Shaw - ...at times explaining his reasons for saying things...just being more consistent.
> Mrs. Perez - And staying with what he's doing...And his format is not wonderful...that's not the focus here so we don't dwell on it but we ask for it. It's just that if we forget to keep asking for it, we don't get it.

Researcher's Comments

In every response, Theodore articulated his opinions about aspects of the books. He included few examples of other kinds of responses in his journal entries (eg. comparison, criticism and question).

In four of Theodore's responses he provided 'some' reasons to explain his opinions. For Responses #1, #2 and #3, Theodore stated he had explained his answers but inspection of these entries revealed contradictory evidence. The researcher felt Theodore needed to more fully explain his reasons and provide additional elaboration of his thoughts. Three of his entries contained unrelated main ideas which affected the flow of the responses. Even in those responses where the ideas were associated, the connections were not always clear. In the researcher's opinion, elaboration and extension of one or two of the main ideas in the entries would have improved the quality of Theodore's responses. The researcher believed he needed to reflect on his emotional responses to the texts in greater depth.

The researcher utilized the classification system developed by Cox and Many (1992b) to determine the stance of the responses (i.e. efferent/aesthetic continuum). The researcher discovered that six of Theodore's responses contained elements of both aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis (Responses #1, #3, #4, #5, #6 and #7). Theodore's other response contained primarily aesthetic responses where selective attention was given to specific parts of a text (Response #2).

Other Information on Response Writing

To Theodore, writing responses to the books he read meant writing about a book and articulating his opinions. Theodore explained, "Well I think it's kind of sort of writing about the book and telling people whether you liked it or not." In every entry Theodore discussed with the researcher, he had indeed written about the texts and expressed his opinions.

When asked how he went about writing a response, Theodore stated he selected some aspect of the text he liked and then expressed his opinion of the latter (and indeed, his responses reflected this approach). He explained, "Well I usually start off with if I liked a picture or if I liked some of the names of the chapters or if there was a part that I thought was kind of neat." In describing the sources of his ideas for his entries, Theodore asserted, "When I write my responses I try to think about what I've just read and if I haven't read for awhile, I'll take my book and just look back a bit." Of the many ideas he experienced while reading, Theodore stated he included those which were his favourites in his entries.

Theodore felt that the teachers had the students write responses to the books they read in order for the children to express their ideas about the books "and some of our criticisms and compliments." As well, he believed the teachers wanted the students to "describe the book to them as if they didn't know what was happening."

Theodore felt response writing was a "good thing". He observed how he found writing responses less difficult now (end of April) than when it was initially introduced.

> At first last year, not very many people liked it because they wanted us to write like whole pages but now it seems easier to write...I've done it for so long and it's kind of--well it's easier to--like last year I was really just learning how to write better. Now it's really simple.

Theodore felt response writing was a worthwhile activity as it provided him "writing experiences." As well, he stated, "It helps us get neater writing as we go along." Theodore believed response writing assisted somewhat in understanding texts. He commented, "Well it kind of helps you. It lets you think it out instead of having to do it on a tape where you don't really have time." Theodore elaborated, "I think the response journal is a good idea because it helps you look at books in a different perspective. When you say it aloud you can't change it but when you write it, you can look back and change it and get a different perspective."

Theodore believed some texts were easier to write responses about than others. The reasons for his opinion were not clearly articulated but further discussion revealed that emotional engagement with a novel was a factor which affected his judgment of ease of response writing. He stated, "Well Snot Stew was kind of easy because it was two cats and I really like animals. I could easily write about that." He identified Harriet the Spy as a novel which was "kind of hard to write responses about" because he found it difficult "not to rewrite the book on something like that." In addition, Theodore believed his response writing was affected by both the length of that particular novel and the fact the events of that book could have actually happened. (The researcher needed to probe for clarification of the latter part of Theodore's answer.)

Theodore expressed interest in reading his peers' journal entries as he thought he could "get some different ideas of how they write and how they give their responses." Theodore's opinion was in contradiction to his description of his group's behaviour on their scheduled days to write responses as he stated the members did not talk to one another as they wrote. "Not usually. We just do it on our own." When observing Theodore's group writing responses, the researcher noted that indeed the boys did converse with one another. However, talk unrelated to the actual activity of 'response writing' seemed to constitute a large proportion of their conversations.

Theodore believed there was a reciprocal relationship between conferencing and response writing as he used ideas from each to assist him with the other.

> If I like something on the tape that someone else has done, I might put that in my response journal. That's another thing about this (referring to the tape which contained his group's recorded conference), it kind of helps you write a bit better when you've talked about it. And also sometimes I'll use what I wrote in my response journal for this (referring to the tape).

When asked how Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw had helped his classmates and he write responses, Theodore expressed several ideas. He discussed how the teachers had shown examples of responses to the class and highlighted both the positive points and areas requiring improvement of these entries.

> They showed us some of the parts that the other people might have made a mistake on and they asked us to try and not make this mistake. And they would also show some of the good parts and try to do stuff like that...

Theodore thought the questions posed by the teachers in their written comments to his responses helped him somewhat. He also remarked how they "mostly wrote about what you wrote about" and this provided feedback regarding the positive and negative aspects of his responses. Theodore felt the teachers' feedback "makes you think about what you are going to write in your other responses because you can look back at some of your mistakes you made and try not to make them again."

The researcher inquired if Theodore thought he knew how to respond to books before being involved in readers' workshop. Without hesitation, Theodore answered affirmatively.

> Well me personally, I did because I like to look for things in the book--something that they made a mistake on or any criticisms that I have about the book. And some good things about the book, I just think about that.

Further discussion revealed that before coming to Mrs. Perez's and Mrs. Shaw's class, Theodore engaged in various types of responses (i.e. those on the mind map) in his head while reading.

Other Aspects of Readers' Workshop

Theodore accurately described the expectations and procedures for the various components of readers' workshop.

To Theodore, 'quality' of responses, one aspect of independent conferences the students were to evaluate, meant "how well you're doing it and basically how you respond." To be worthy of a mark of 10, Theodore felt the responses should include: sufficient quantity of content; explanations of ideas;

and various types of responses (e.g. not be solely about the members' favourite parts). As well, the responses should avoid retelling the story. These criteria were identical to those Theodore cited when judging his written responses. (Obviously the mechanical aspects of writing were not mentioned as Theodore was discussing oral responses.)

The researcher asked Theodore to discuss the various components of readers' workshop. When engaging in both recorded and independent conferences, Theodore described how his group talked "about the book, what we think is happening, what's happened and what's going to happen." In teacher conferences, Theodore described how "the teacher will interrupt every now and then and just kind of ask us something about the book or ask us what's happening or what we're talking about." Again Theodore stated that the topics of discussion in teacher conferences were similar to those of the other two types of conferences.

Theodore stated he enjoyed readers' workshop and felt the most worthwhile part of it was the reading "because it helps other kids learn how to read." He also noted how reading "helps a lot of kids who don't like books--it lets them open their imaginations." Theodore asserted that if allowed to change any part of readers' workshop, he would alter the book celebrations as he felt they were an ineffective use of time. Theodore wanted to read rather than devote three days to a book celebration. He observed, "You could already be into another book and have almost finished another one." Theodore also stated he experienced difficulties generating ideas for book celebrations.

Susan

Profile

Susan's teachers identified her as a top achiever in grade 5, "the brightest kid in 5th grade all round." Her teachers expounded upon Susan's academic strengths in all subjects and noted her ability to "excel at things like problem solving--anything that requires critical thinking...divergent thinking." Mrs. Perez described Susan as "really teachable" as she recognized strategies when "taught them and kind of adds them to her repertoire." The teachers also discussed Susan's pleasant personality, confidence, conscientiousness and sense of responsibility.

When asked to describe herself as a reader, Susan declared, "Well I like reading lots of books and most of them make sense to me--I understand them and I can't stop reading." She proudly described the quantity of books she had read to the researcher. Susan stated mysteries and historical fiction were her two favourite genres to read.

The researcher also asked Susan to describe herself as a writer. Susan answered, "Well usually I have lots of ideas in writers' workshop. I write lots of mysteries." She acknowledged she sometimes 'borrowed' ideas from the literature she read to include in her own stories.

The researcher observed Susan on multiple occasions during readers' workshop. She was an active participant during her group's conferences and encouraged others to become involved as well. Susan was not the 'leader' of her group but she made significant contributions to all of her group's activities.

The researcher found Susan to be an extremely cooperative student to interview. She appeared to be enthusiastic about participating in the study and seemed to answer the researcher's questions honestly and conscientiously. Susan came well prepared to the second interview as she had marked specific responses to discuss with the researcher and had written comments about each entry.

Written Responses

From a four month time period, Susan selected six responses to discuss with the researcher. Her continuum of evaluation ranged from "excellent" to "not good" and her assessments of the responses have been indicated in parentheses. The entries have been reproduced without corrections to spelling and punctuation.

Response #1 (excellent)

I am reading Caddie Woodlawn by Carol Ryrie Brink. Today I am on page 97.

I like this book very much. It's a good book! The author really describes the setting and the characters are good because you can really picture them - they're like really there. The only character I don't like is Robert Ireton, a hired man that doesn't do anything, he's so boring. The plot is good, but really nothing big has happened. It's just every day stuff, but it's good. I can relate to some of the things that happen in the book. This book deserves the medal that it won!

Response #2 (excellent)

I am reading Matilda by Roald Dahl. Today we are on page 82.

I really like Roald Dahl's writing. He uses lots of humor and children like this. I also like Quentin Blake as an illustrator. His pictures really fit Mr. Dahl's writing. The same illustrator did The Twits and some more. His illustrations are bold and I like them. I really understand why it's a national bestseller. I'd rather read Roald Dahl's books than watch T.V. Is Mister Dahl still living? I hope so because I'd love it if he kept on writing. I like his style of writing as you've already learned.

P.S. If you haven't read this book I recemend it or anything else Roald Dahl has wrote.

Response #3 (very good)

I am reading Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh. Today I am on page 143.

I wonder if Harriet will still like writing when she's grown up? She might not because she wrote so much when she was little. She might be sick of writing. Harriet writes some weird things in her note book. Some things she writes are hard to understand. Like "Had it, Think about it." My opinion why Harriet stayed away from the house untill 5 o'clock is that it reminds her of Ole Golly.

Response #4 (good)

I am reading Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh. Today I am page 265.

I wonder what will happen in book 3. I think it won't change much. She might become friends again or Ole Golly might come back, but I don't think they'll move or anything like that. I perdict that the kids in Harriet's class will be friends again with Harriet because Sport didn't want to be mad with Harriet. I liked the part about when Harriet was in the park and she found the frog in the bush. I would have guessed that Harriet liked the frog because that's the kind of person she is and she doesn't have anybody eles to like.

Response #5 (not very good)

We have completed Caddie Woodlawn by Carol Ryrie Brink.

The farm where Caddie lives reminds me of my farm because it's got a forest next door and a lake. I wonder how far the school is from the farm? It must be a far distance. In the chapter Warren Preforms if it wasn't for Tom how taught Warren the new poem they wouldn't have got cought in the rain. It must have been fun to get that wet.

Response #6 (not good)

I am reading Caddie Woodlawn by Carol Ryrie Brink. Today I am on page 188.

I wonder how long Indian John and his tribe will be away? And why did he give Caddie his father's old scalp belt? He could of taken it with him. Unless he would never come back and it was for her to remember him. I think Caddie did the right thing spending the whole silver dallor on the Hankinson boys. I know the feeling of giving! It's as fun as recieving.

In Susan's opinion, the two journal entries which were "excellent" contained: explanations for her ideas or opinions; starters from the mind map; and comments or ideas about plot, setting and characters. Susan also mentioned how she had talked about the author and the illustrator in Response #2. She asserted, "I explained my reasons and I used my map starter thing. And I told about plot, setting and characters. And I recommended it down here. And I told about the author and the illustrator."

Susan stated she had explained her thoughts, used the mind map starters, and adhered to the right format in the responses she judged as "very good" and "good".

> Yes. I thought it was very good because it explains what I thought well and it tells why I thought that. And it is in the right form because I have this [the title and author of the book, and the page number] and the date and...I used the mind map--like I used the starter things and that was pretty good.

Susan expressed several observations about the journal entry she evaluated as being "not very good". She stated the response lacked a date, content about setting and characters, and reasons explaining her thoughts or ideas. Susan also noted the awkward sentence structure in one section of the entry.

> I didn't tell about setting, plot and characters--just plot I think is all I told about. And I didn't understand what I wrote--like this part right here. It's got lots of words that don't mean anything. And I could have used better words and the responses weren't great. Like I didn't tell why I thought that.

For the response judged as "not good", Susan observed she neglected to tell why she thought what she did and admitted she had difficulty understanding some of the content of the entry. She stated, "Because I didn't tell why I thought what I did but it was in the right form. And I didn't understand some of what I wrote."

Thus in Susan's opinion, a response was judged favourably if it included explanations of ideas; contained information on character, setting and plot; adhered to the proper format; and included starters from the mind map.

Before the researcher explained to the focus children how she wanted them to select responses from their journals to discuss with her, she posed the question, "In your opinion what makes a 'good' response?" Susan verbalized that a 'good response' must make sense to other people and be interesting.

> If it makes sense to other people. And if you can read it. And a good response needs to be interesting. And sometimes if you read it, you like go to sleep...And well other people can--they can compare with it. They can compare it and explain, think sort of the same thing--someone who has read it.

Thus Susan's criteria of a 'good' response became more specific after she critically examined her responses.

Implicit in Susan's discussion of the responses she judged less favourably were areas in which she felt a need to improve. When asked directly what she thought she needed to do to make her responses better overall, Susan expressed concern about including ideas about plot, setting and character; explaining her answers; and adhering to the correct form.

> Well, I can tell setting, plot and characters--I think I should tell all of them. And not just one area. And I should explain why I say what I do. And use the right form.

Susan's guidelines for evaluating her responses were very consistent as three areas she suggested for improvement were the converse of characteristics she identified in her 'good' responses.

However, Susan's suggestions for improvement were somewhat surprising to the researcher because from reading her responses, it seemed that generally, Susan included the items she listed.

> Researcher - Generally do you do those things?
> Susan - Yeah. Sometimes I forget to tell why. But they're pretty good.

Teachers' Comments

For Response #1, Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Perez noted how Susan had responded to plot, setting and character. They remarked on Susan's efforts to explain her ideas and they felt the latter was a strength. In their discussion of Response #2, the teachers noted how Susan had developed an idea and communicated her enthusiasm for the book.

> Mrs. Perez - Susan really likes to communicate her enthusiasm for a book in her response and I think she enjoys trying to explain why it's good. To her that's as valid as talking about plot, setting and character. To me, that's a very sophisticated sort of response.

For the responses Susan judged as "very good" and "good", the teachers articulated that she had written cohesive entries and had developed and explained her ideas.

> Mrs. Shaw - ...she picks up on an idea and then she really goes into it...all the way through here...her thoughts flow. She uses the basic ideas on the mind map but it doesn't come out like a formula.
> Mrs. Perez - Everytime she says something, she goes on further with it--and I think that's what makes her's exceptional.

The teachers agreed with Susan's judgment of Response #5 ("not very good"). They too noted the awkward sentence in the entry and felt that overall, it was not one of her best efforts.

For Susan's sixth response, Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw stated that once again she had clearly expressed her ideas and articulated reasons for the latter. They were surprised at her evaluation of this entry as "not good" and felt that is was an "O.K." response. Mrs. Shaw observed, "Actually though there were parts of this one that were good though...it was short but I kind of liked it. That's interesting how she didn't."

In their written replies to Susan's responses, the teachers made several personal comments about their own feelings or thoughts about the books. As well, they wrote evaluative remarks, reiterated content written in Susan's responses, and made instructional suggestions.

> Example 1 - I like the way you have given your opinion on the book over all. You have discussed the characters and the plot and you've told me why you think the way you do. Even the character you don't like may add to your enjoyment of the story--sometimes it's fun to dislike someone.
>
> Example 2 - In the old days, lots of kids had to walk a long distance to school all the time! You sound like you live on a really pretty farm. Be careful of your sentences. That last one wasn't too clear. I'm glad you're enjoying the book.

Several times in their discussion of Susan's responses, the teachers remarked that her work was superior and exceptional. When asked to suggest areas for improvement in response writing for Susan, they felt she needed to read over her work but acknowledged time constraints.

> Mrs. Perez - The thing is when you use the whole time to write you don't have time to go back and go over it. And always you have to realize that when you read these things that it's not a polished product--it's a one time shot.

They also stated that spelling was a weakness for Susan but neither they nor Susan mentioned it as an area for improvement in response writing. Mrs. Perez commented, "She's also quite aware of her spelling--like her spelling is her definite weakness--she doesn't spell well." Actually, Susan's spelling was very conventional in the journal entries she discussed with the researcher.

In discussing Susan's responses, both the teachers and she mentioned the importance of including explanations of ideas and rereading content. There was some inconsistency between the teachers' and Susan's descriptions of her responses as Susan described aspects about her written entries which were not mentioned by the teachers.

Researcher's Comments

In all of her responses, Susan expressed her opinions about certain issues associated with the texts and included some explanations to support her opinions or thoughts. In several instances however, the reasons were not completely developed. As Susan discussed several unrelated ideas in each response, the flow or continuity of the entries appeared to be adversely affected. Susan's inclusion of many ideas in each response could be attributed to her attempts to adhere to the directions of the teachers. (i.e. In the initial response which all students copied into their journals, the instructions were "I must remember to respond in different ways using my mind map.") The researcher believed an indepth development of one or two of the main ideas in each entry, where she examined and reflected on her emotional involvement with the texts, would have improved the quality of Susan's responses.

The researcher utilized the classification system developed by Cox and Many (1992b) to determine the stance of the responses (i.e. efferent/aesthetic continuum). The researcher discovered that three of Susan's responses contained elements of both aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis (Responses #1, #3 and #5). Susan's other three responses contained primarily aesthetic responses where selective attention was given to specific parts of texts (Responses #2, #4 and #6).

Other Information on Response Writing

When asked what it meant to write responses to the books she read, Susan replied, "Well, it means giving your ideas out. And telling what you think about it and responding." The content of Susan's journal entries accurately reflected her beliefs of the meaning of writing responses.

The researcher questioned Susan about how she went about writing her responses. She stated she read the books and then the ideas "just come back to me when I write, I don't write them down or anything as I read." Elaborating on the issue of deciding which ideas to write about, Susan remarked that the ideas must make sense and be interesting.

> Well, if they make sense to me but don't on the paper, then I don't usually use them. And if I really like the idea, I write it down but sometimes the ideas are dull...[I write about] the ones that I remember and if they're exciting and stuff.

Susan believed Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw had the children write responses to the literature they read in order to discover what each individual student thought about the texts outside of their group.

> I think they do that to see our individual response to the book at that time. They can see what you think of it outside of your group. We might not fully respond on the tape or mention a different point of view.

Susan expressed mixed feelings about response writing. She acknowledged that sometimes she was enthusiastic about writing responses but at other times she experienced difficulties generating ideas to write about. "Well, sometimes I really get into it and sometimes I just can't think of anything to write about." When 'stuck', Susan indicated that she might reread a chapter but seldom used the mind map at the front of her journal.

Susan felt that writing responses was a worthwhile activity as it provided individuals an opportunity to express their thoughts in writing. She believed the latter would be beneficial in later life as well. She stated, "Well you can get your ideas out on paper and it's good for when you grow up--when you get older...Because well, if you don't know how to write down your thoughts, you're not going to do very well in life later."

When asked if she had learned anything by writing responses, Susan said, "Yeah. I've learned how to and how it helps you in school." She explained how writing responses had helped her write and read stories. Susan believed that response writing had assisted her in forming ideas for her own stories. She said, "from writing it down, it gives me ideas how to write them." With regards to response writing helping her read books, Susan felt that writing ideas resulted in further reflection and thought while reading. She stated, "Well, if you write down stuff and you think about that, then you think about it more when you're reading it." Susan also believed that writing responses enhanced her understanding of the literature she read.

Susan felt texts with fast moving plots and excitement were easier to write responses about. She explained novels were easier to respond to, "if they have lots of things wrote in them--like Matilda. A lot of exciting things." She also implied that texts in which she could empathize with the characters were easier to respond to.

> Researcher - What about Underground to Canada? Was that a fairly easy one to write about?
> Susan - Yeah, I think so.
> Researcher - Why was that?
> Susan - Writing about slavery and how it wouldn't happen if I were in charge.
> Researcher - Harriet the Spy? How was that?
> Susan - I think that would be pretty easy.
> Researcher - O.K., why would that be?

Susan - Because she does lots of things that I'd like to do.

Thus emotional engagement with a text was a critical feature which affected Susan's perception of ease of responding.

According to Susan, on her group's scheduled days for writing in their response journals, the members did not converse about the content of their entries; they just wrote. The researcher's observations concurred with Susan's descriptions of the behaviours of her group when writing responses. Susan thought it would be interesting to read her classmates' journals as she felt other people would have different ideas.

Susan felt that conferencing helped somewhat with response writing as she sometimes wrote about ideas discussed in her group's conferences. However, Susan acknowledged that she usually had her own ideas to write about. As well, Susan stated she used ideas from her written responses to discuss in her group's conferences.

When asked how the teachers had assisted Susan with her response writing, she identified the initial mini-lessons on response writing. As well, she mentioned that the response example copied in the front of her journal provided a reminder of the expectations for response writing. "And the thing at the front, how you're suppose to do it, the form and in the bottom it says what's suppose to be in there." Further, she felt the content of the teachers' written replies provided feedback about aspects regarding format and content.

> Well, they respond back to us so that we know what we're doing wrong or right. And they remind us of the form when we forget the date and stuff and they make sure that we do the characters, plot and setting and sometimes they talk about characters and stuff like that and they respond to what you wrote so you know that they understood it or they didn't understand it. And sometimes they ask me why, why I thought that. And back here, like this (the awkward sentence) she wrote about that and it

doesn't make sense....

The researcher inquired if Susan thought she knew how to respond to books before being involved in readers' workshop in this class. Her initial reply was, "Well, not in writing. I wouldn't conference about books before. I'd think about it." When asked what kinds of things she thought about, she answered, "Like if it was a good story or not. And if it's for my age and if it's a good author and stuff like that." Further discussion revealed that while reading, Susan would both relate texts to her life or other books and make predictions. Susan noted that before she came to Mrs. Perez's and Mrs. Shaw's class, she had responded in various ways in her head (i.e. the mind map starters) while she read but would not "speak them for other people or write them down or anything." It is noteworthy how Susan had previously indicated she had "learned how to" write responses in this class when in actuality, she had been responding to literature before participating in readers' workshop. Perhaps she was referring to the specific response format the teachers of this class required the students to follow.

Other Aspects of Readers' Workshop

Susan's descriptions of each aspect of readers' workshop indicated a clear and accurate understanding of the expectations and procedures of the program.

On the evaluation sheet for independent conferences 'quality' of responses was one aspect to be evaluated by the students. To Susan, 'quality' of responses meant how the group members responded to each other and how they expressed their ideas. She answered, "It means how we respond to other people. And how we give our thoughts out. And we usually give ourselves about an eight." To score a 10 on this particular facet, Susan felt that "we'd need to respond like how we feel about what the person has just said. And you need to discuss that part a little more before we go on to the next part." Thus Susan's criteria for 'quality' oral responses differed from those used to judge written responses.

The researcher asked Susan about the three types of conferences engaged in by her group. During independent conferences, Susan reported her group would discuss a book's setting, plot, characters, illustrations, illustrator, and author. She asserted that discussions of characters and author's style constituted a large part of their conferences. Susan noted how her group members did not use their mind maps during their conferences and she believed the individuals in her group did not need to use it. To Susan, recorded and independent conferences were similar as her group talked about the same kinds of topics or issues (as she outlined for independent conferences). However, she felt teacher conferences were "sort of different because the teacher also gives responses. And sometimes you don't notice what the teacher says because they're a little bit older and they see different things." Susan acknowledged that she enjoyed teacher conferences as she liked hearing different ideas. She felt the teachers posed questions during the conferences to discover "what you think."

Susan communicated her enjoyment of readers' workshop. She explained how readers' workshop was interesting, fun and educational. "You learn from writing and conferencing. And you learn how to conference and stuff like that. And it's overall fun." Susan also expressed her pleasure of working with the members of her group; a feeling she had not experienced the previous year. She identified book celebrations, selection of a new book and conferences as her favourite parts of readers' workshop. She stated she enjoyed conferences as she was able "to see new ideas from a different point of view." Susan declined the opportunity to suggest any changes to readers' workshop, as she felt "it's just about right."

Chapter Summary

Through discussion of their written literature responses, the six focus students identified characteristics of a 'good' response and suggested areas for improvement in their journal entries. The teachers also articulated their criteria of a 'good' written response to literature and identified areas requiring improvement in the students' responses. In addition, the children expressed their beliefs about other aspects of response writing and commented about various components of readers' workshop.

CHAPTER 7

Discussion of the Students' Written Responses to Literature

Introduction

A discussion of the analysis of the students' written responses to literature and the findings of other response-related issues are included in this chapter. The chapter is organized into five subsections. The students', the teachers' and the researcher's comments about the children's written responses to literature are presented in the first three subsections. The fourth subsection summarizes and discusses other information on response writing. Finally, a summation and discussion of the data on other aspects of readers' workshop are presented in the fifth subsection.

The Students' Written Responses to Literature

Students' Comments

Before examining their response journals and selecting specific entries to discuss with the researcher, the students were asked to articulate their beliefs of the features of a 'good' response. Numerous characteristics were verbalized by the children (see Figure 11). Four children believed a 'good' response included explanations of ideas and opinions. The students also discussed the importance of incorporating the mind map starters, avoiding retelling the story, and using correct mechanics in a 'good' response. In addition, other criteria were cited by individual children (information about setting, plot and characters; quantity of content; variety of responses; ideas or feelings about the texts; and interesting and comprehensible responses).

After the students examined and discussed their response journals, they articulated fewer criteria of a 'good' response (see Figure 11). All of the focus children stated that a 'good' response should include explanations of ideas. Five students discussed the importance of using the starters from the mind map. Three students expressed the necessity of discussing plot, setting and characters in a 'good' response. Adherence to correct format and mechanics, sufficient length, avoidance of retelling, and discussion of more than 'one thing' were other criteria articulated by one or two children.

Figure 11 - Students' Criteria of a 'Good' Written Response to Literature

	Frequency of Reasons	
	Before Examining Responses	After Examining Responses
explanations of ideas and opinions	4	6
used mind map starters	2	5
correct mechanics	2	2
included setting, plot and characters	1	3
avoided retelling	2	1
sufficient length	1	2
correct format	0	2
made sense	1	0
stated ideas or feelings about book	1	0
included different responses	1	0
interesting	1	0
wrote about more than one thing	0	1

The students identified various areas for improvement in their written responses (see Figure 12). When discussing their specific journal entries, five children mentioned mechanical aspects and four noted the need for explanations of ideas and opinions. The importance of writing about more than one part of a book was mentioned by three students. Adherence to correct format, inclusion of adequate content, and incorporation of information on plot, setting and character were areas noted by two children. Only one focus child expressed the need to avoid retelling the story.

When asked how their responses could be improved overall, the students expressed several ideas (see Figure 12). Three students articulated the need to improve their writing mechanics; explain their answers; and discuss plot, setting and characters. Two students mentioned the importance of including sufficient content and using more ideas from the mind map. Other suggested areas for improvement were avoidance of retelling, inclusion of more detail, and adherence to correct format.

Figure 12 - Students' Suggested Areas for Improvement in Written Responses

	Frequency of Ideas	
	Comments About Specific Responses	Overall Areas
mechanical aspects	5	3
explanations of ideas	4	3
quantity of content	2	3
information about plot, setting and characters	2	3
correct format	2	1
talk about more than one part	3	0
avoid retelling	1	1
use more ideas from the mind map	0	2

Some elements of the written responses were repeatedly referred to by the students in their discussions of both the favourable and less favourable aspects of their work. The focus children identified explanations of ideas as being very important. The students also stressed the necessity of using the starters from the mind map and of discussing plot, setting and characters. The three main characteristics identified by the children were to be expected as the

the initial response entry the students had copied into their journals stated, "I must remember to respond in different ways using my mind map, and comment on plot, character and setting. I must be sure to give reasons for my responses."

When discussing areas for improvement, a recurring factor was the mechanical aspects of writing, including spelling, handwriting, and format. The latter may be explained by the teachers' instructional and evaluative comments written in the students' journals which addressed those facets. As well, the teachers often marked incorrect mechanical aspects in the students' responses (e.g. they would correct spelling errors and/or write the correct spellings in the margins, add capitals and punctuation where appropriate, and draw arrows to indicate correct format). Further, in late April, the teachers had conducted a mini-lesson on the usage of correct punctuation and capitalization in the students' journal entries.

Teachers' Comments

There was a high degree of consistency between the teachers' and the students' judgments of the written responses (e.g. excellent, good, not so good). There was complete agreement between the teachers and Karen and Vince, one disagreement each between the teachers and Jeannie, Susan and Kevin, and two inconsistent judgments between the teachers and Theodore.

As the teachers examined and discussed the students' responses, they articulated many reasons supporting their judgments of the journal entries (see Figure 13). When discussing the positive aspects of four focus children's responses, the teachers noted the inclusion of explanation of ideas. The use of starters from the mind map and the cohesiveness or flow of the entry were other criteria cited for the responses of three of the children. Thus it seemed that the teachers utilized three main criteria when judging the students' written responses. However, when discussing the children's entries, the teachers appeared to evaluate the students' entries based on their abilities and previous work. As well, the teachers articulated positive comments about each student's responses. The teachers verbalized the following reasons for judging specific student's entries positively: responding to plot, setting and character; phrasing; being comprehensible; and posing quality questions.

Figure 13 - Teachers' Criteria of a 'Good' Written Response to Literature

	Frequency of Reasons
explained ideas	4
cohesive - flowed	3
used mind map starters	3
phrasing	1
mechanical aspects	1
used correct format	1
avoided retelling	1
responded to plot, setting and characters	1
comprehensibility	1
asked quality questions	1

In discussing the students' written responses, the teachers also mentioned their disapproval of students retelling the story.

> Mrs. Shaw - That's the thing we're the hardest on--is retelling the story.
> Mrs. Perez - Like even if it's short but you're not retelling the story--if you're asking some questions, if you're making some observations--that's O.K. But if you tell us the story, oh, we don't like that.

Thus the teachers seemed to be indicating the undesirability of efferent responses. Although the content of the responses appeared to be the focus, the teachers also discussed the importance of correct mechanical aspects (i.e. format, spelling, punctuation) in the journal entries and stated that they expected the responses to "be legible."

> Mrs. Perez - And really that's not the focus here [correct format] so we don't dwell on it but we ask for it. It's just that if we forget to keep asking for it, we don't get it.
> Mrs. Shaw - Because at the same time, we're trying to teach them something else too - *paragraphing and that.*

During the last interview with the teachers, the researcher directly asked the teachers to articulate their beliefs of the characteristics of a 'good' response. They stated the necessity for students to explain their answers, to respond in different ways, and to discuss plot, setting and characters. Mrs. Shaw explained, "a 'good' response--really we talked about them before--uses a variety of forms to respond and explains why you feel that way--it's those quality of response things again" (referring to her answer of the criteria constituting a 'quality' response). Thus the teachers' answer was consistent with the directions of the initial response entry. As well, the three criteria explicated by the teachers were identical to the three main aspects articulated by the children in their descriptions of 'good' responses. Therefore, it seemed that the students had learned the teachers' expectations for literature responses. Other research has also found that students learned that certain ways of responding were preferred in their classrooms (Hickman, 1983, 1984; McMahon, 1992; Michalak, 1977; Purves, 1973; Raphael et al., 1992). In acknowledging the effects of school on response to literature, Purves stated that "there are few 'untrained' responses" to literature (1985, p. 65).

The criteria of responding in different ways (i.e. using starters from the mind map) and explaining ideas or opinions were articulated both during the discussions of the students' literature responses and when the teachers were asked directly. Even though the teachers identified responding to plot, setting and character as a criterion of a 'quality' response, they seldom referred to this guideline when discussing the students' actual written responses. Interestingly, in an earlier interview in which the teachers were describing their program to the researcher, Mrs. Perez explained how initially they had intended that the children respond to some aspect of setting, plot and characters in every response. However, the teachers discovered that "in order to get that, it formulized their writing way too much. And it was always interfering with any real genuine response." (The latter comment seemed to illustrate the teachers' desire for the students to respond aesthetically to texts.) She explained how they had discontinued that practice and found that now the students were "intuitively or naturally" responding to those elements. However, the teachers also stated that if they found the children concentrating on one aspect in their responses (i.e. plot, setting or characters), they would ask them to discuss another element.

Thus the teachers' remarks about their expectations regarding the discussion of plot, setting and characters in the students' written responses seemed to be somewhat inconsistent. Perhaps their insistence on responding to plot, setting and character varied with individual children (i.e. depending on the quality of the content). As well, there seemed to be an inherent contradiction in the fact that the teachers expressed concern about "formulizing" the students' responses but had presented specific instructions for the children to follow when writing responses (i.e. the initial journal entry).

It seemed that the discussion of the students' journal entries resulted in a broadening of the teachers' criteria of a 'good' response. It appeared that the teachers looked for some positive aspect in every child's written responses. Interestingly, the children's criteria of a 'good' response narrowed as a result of their discussion of their journal entries. Perhaps as the students perused their journals and selected specific responses to discuss with the researcher, they reread the teachers' comments about their entries (which addressed both favourable and less favourable aspects of their work). The latter could then have influenced the criteria the children utilized when judging their written responses. As well, the students may have reread the initial journal entry and had its specific criteria in mind when they read their responses.

The teachers noted several areas of the children's responses which required improvement (see Figure 14). For five students, the teachers expressed the need for explanations of ideas and opinions. Thus it appeared the teachers wanted the students to extend their responses and further their thinking by providing supportive content for their ideas and opinions. For three children, they articulated the importance of concentrating and exerting a better effort. Other suggested areas for improvement were mechanical aspects, quantity of content, avoidance of retelling, adherence to correct format, proofreading, and overall quality of content.

Figure 14 - Teachers' Suggested Areas for Improvement in Written Responses

	Frequency of Ideas
explain ideas	5
increase effort and concentration	3
the need to reread work	3
mechanical aspects	2
avoid retelling the story	2
include more content	2
adhere to the correct format	2

improve content	2
use mind map starters	1

In discussing both the favourable and less favourable aspects of the students' responses, the main criterion emphasized by the teachers was the necessity of including explanations of ideas and opinions. This aspect was repeatedly referred to by the children as well. Interestingly, on the researcher's initial visitation to the classroom (February 19, 1993), the teachers conducted a mini-lesson on response entries, noting how some students were simply saying, 'I think', 'I wonder', 'I feel' and were neglecting to explain their comments. The teachers read from Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird by Jean Little, and then asked the students to 'respond' to the text, paying particular attention to explaining their feelings. The teachers discussed how the explanations or reasons for their ideas were to come from their minds and/or from the text. Once Mrs. Shaw read from the novel for three or four minutes, the students wrote a response, and then shared it with the other children at their table. The children were reminded to look for the "reasons why they said what they did." Some students were then asked to read their responses aloud to the class and again attention was directed to the reasons (or lack of) included in the responses.

The teachers also commented upon the cohesiveness and flow of the entries and the importance of using starters from the mind map in their discussions of both the favourable and less favourable aspects of the students' responses. The children also talked about the mind map but they did not mention the cohesiveness of their entries. Interestingly, when identifying areas requiring improvement, the teachers did not stress usage of the mind map nor discussion of plot, setting and characters (two criteria of 'quality' responses they had articulated previously).

Overwhelmingly, the teachers' written replies to the children's responses contained evaluative and instructional comments. As well, the teachers wrote a few personal and general remarks in their replies. The teachers discussed their written comments when they were asked to articulate their beliefs/opinions about their roles in response writing. Mrs. Perez believed their primary role was to respond to the children's responses. The teachers explained how the students responded to the literature and they responded to what the children wrote about the literature. Mrs. Perez stated it was necessary for their replies "to have substance and to be positive and to address something that the child will be able to relate to--like you can't make it too high level thinking." Mrs. Shaw added how she asked questions when writing back to further the students' thinking about the content of their responses or to encourage alternative thinking. Mrs. Perez described how she often asked a question to "expose a weakness" - something about the response that she felt was lacking. The teachers stated that the main intent of their written replies was to get the children thinking and to provide them with possible ideas to include in their subsequent entries. The teachers' descriptions of their roles in responding to the students' written responses accurately reflected the actual content of their comments written to the children. However, their descriptions of their roles (and the actual content of their replies) contradicted their earlier remark that their replies should "model what a response should look like."

It appeared that Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw were using their comments to instruct or guide the children in their response writing (a finding similar to the teacher's behaviour in Wollman-Bonilla's 1989 study). It seemed that the teachers were in a quandary - they wanted to model response writing but they also wanted the children's responses to improve. Perhaps they did not feel that modeling response writing was a method which would improve the students' entries.

Researcher's Comments

The content of the students' responses indicated that generally, they were expressing their thoughts or opinions about the texts they were reading. In some of the children's responses, they had attempted to include explanations to support their ideas but the reasons were not fully developed. Several of the children believed that they had included explanations of ideas in their entries, but inspection of the responses revealed conflicting evidence in many instances (i.e. the children had not explained their ideas). Many of the journal entries seemed disjointed as they contained unrelated ideas or thoughts. To the researcher, it seemed that the quality of the children's responses would have been improved by their reflecting on their emotional engagements with the texts and elaborating on and extending one or two of the main ideas in their entries. The children needed to reflect on their affective responses to the literature and examine how their aesthetic readings were contributing to their evolving understandings of texts, themselves, other individuals and the human condition. In addition, it appeared that the teachers' requirements and expectations for response writing constrained and formatted the content of the students' entries. Although the children seemed to be cognizant of the teachers' criteria for a 'good' response, few journal entries actually adhered to these expectations and standards.

When the researcher utilized the efferent/aesthetic continuum developed by Cox and Many (1992b) to determine the stance of the written responses, it was discovered that 11 written responses contained primarily aesthetic responses where selective attention was given to specific parts of texts. Twenty-two responses contained elements of both aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis. One response appeared to be written from a primarily efferent stance as the student focused on retelling the text. One journal entry seemed to be written from the most efferent point on the continuum developed by Cox and Many (1992b).

According to the classification system developed by Cox and Many (1992b), the most aesthetic responses were those in which there was clear evidence of the readers' lived-through experience with texts. None of the focus students' written responses were categorized at the most aesthetic point of the continuum. Although nearly all of the written responses contained aesthetic elements, there seemed to be no instances of the children's responses extending or deepening their lived-through experiences of the literary works. As stated previously, the students' written responses often contained many unrelated ideas with little or no 'discussion' or 'exploration' of the articulated ideas or opinions. There appeared to be no examples where the children had "respond[ed] deeply to the literature" (Squire, 1990, p. 22). Perhaps the teachers' format for written responses inhibited the writing of entries which could be classified as the most aesthetic responses. However, there were likewise very few instances of discussions in the students' independent and recorded conferences which exemplified the most aesthetic or 'deep' responses to literature either (i.e. the oral discussions displayed a similar pattern as the written responses). In the teachers' conferences in particular, a substantial amount of the content of the conversations were of a more efferent nature. Therefore, further instruction and modeling may have been required for the children to grasp an understanding of 'responding deeply to literature'. It appeared that both the teachers and the students needed additional guidance in the engagement of behaviours which promoted/facilitated in-depth responses (both oral and written).

Other Information on Response Writing

To the focus children, writing responses meant expressing their ideas, thoughts or feelings about the books they were reading. In general, the content of the students' journal entries reflected their beliefs of the meaning of 'response writing'.

When asked how they went about writing responses, three students explained how they thought about what they had read. For the focus children, it seemed there were three main factors which influenced their decisions regarding the content to include in their entries: parts of the texts they liked; ideas from their last day's reading; and starters from the mind map. In their interviews, all of the key informants expressed concern over their lack of ideas when writing in their journal entries (and when conferencing in their groups).

Five of the focus children believed the teachers had them write responses in order to discover each individual's thoughts or opinions or feelings about the texts. Two students also felt the teachers were able to discover what the books were about by having the children write responses.

The teachers were asked to articulate their reasons for having the children write responses to the books they read. The first reason they stated was for enjoyment, as they felt that writing about texts would positively influence the students' understandings of books (which would then affect the students' enjoyment of reading). As well, the teachers thought that writing about texts clarified thinking. Mrs. Perez stated, "when you have to write your thoughts, that's when it's like a distilling--you come down to what's really important." Further, they felt that response writing equipped students with "the 'tools' they need later on--whether it's an essay in high school...really this kind of thing is a life skill that they're going to need later on to finish school and to finish other things." In addition, the journal entries provided "data for parents and teachers" which could be evaluated. Finally, Mrs. Perez explained how response writing provided a medium for the children "to develop the ability to express themselves in a standard conventional written form that is legible to someone else who might want to know what they're thinking."

The teachers were surprised by the students' beliefs about why they were writing literature responses. Upon hearing some of the students' ideas, the teachers demonstrated their commitment to reflect on their actions and consider appropriate measures as they discussed how they should explicitly inform the children of their reasons for having them write responses. Mrs. Shaw suggested, "Maybe we should be telling them WHY we're doing this. They should know why we're doing this." Perhaps the teachers' mini-lessons and modeling of response writing had not communicated their purposes and intentions to the students or perhaps the children had misinterpreted the teachers' verbalizations and actions.

When queried about their feelings regarding response writing, three of the focus children responded positively, two expressed mixed feelings and one reacted negatively. Three students stated they experienced difficulties in generating ideas to write about in their journal entries. One student felt it was easier to orally express his ideas than to write them. Two children felt that response writing provided opportunities for individuals to write down their ideas and to tell their thoughts to others.

All of the focus children felt that response writing was a worthwhile activity. The two main reasons articulated to support their belief were that response writing provided an opportunity for individuals to communicate their ideas and it was a different medium for expression of thought (i.e. compared to discussion). When asked directly if the students felt that response writing helped them better understand the books they read, five responded affirmatively and one stated, "Somewhat." Three students believed that individuals thought about something to a greater extent when they wrote about it. The two weaker academic students stated that response writing enhanced their memories of textual events. The students believed they had learned many things by writing responses about the books they had read. The children felt response writing helped them with both reading and writing stories, and in expressing their ideas in writing. Two children felt they had learned 'how to' write responses. Thus, the students articulated many benefits of response writing.

All of the focus students believed that some books were easier to respond to than others. Other researchers have found that text played a significant role in determining students' responses (Cox & Many, 1992b; Galda, 1992; Hancock, 1993b; Studier, 1978). The two children the teachers had identified as below average academically explained how the comprehensibility of texts affected their ease of response writing. All of the focus students identified books with fast moving plots, which included excitement and action, as easier to respond to. For these focus children, it seemed that an individual's emotional engagement with a text was paramount in affecting ease of response writing. The importance of emotional involvement with texts has been articulated by several researchers and theorists. Beach wrote "research suggests that a reader's emotional responses are essential to understanding a text" (1990a, p. 69). Other individuals have also found a relationship between readers' personal engagements with texts and their levels of interpretation (Beach, 1990b; Many, 1991; Marshall, 1987; Newell et al., 1989; Squire, 1964).

All of the students indicated that they would like to read other people's responses, with one student stipulating how the individuals would need to be adept at writing responses. The children felt their peers would have different ideas and believed they would be able to learn more about response writing by reading others' responses. Interestingly, when writing responses in their groups, none of the focus students shared their entries with other group members. In four of the focus students' groups, the members conversed while writing their responses but a significant amount of this talk seemed to be unrelated to the journal entries or the novels.

Five of the children felt there was a reciprocal relationship between conferencing and response writing as each served as a source of ideas for the other. The other focus student felt that conferencing helped somewhat with response writing.

The teachers also felt that discussing literature orally with both adults and peers assisted the children in generating and formulating ideas which would then assist them with response writing. Mrs. Shaw stated that "when they have to sit down and write they think of things they've talked about with their peers, they think of the things they've talked about with their teachers--all that stuff goes into it--that's what they end up writing. And then some of the things that they think up later." The teachers seemed to believe that there was a reciprocal relationship between the reading conferences and response writing.

> Researcher - I asked the students if they thought conferencing helped with response writing or vice versa.
> Mrs. Perez - Obviously we think that because we built the program that way but what do they think?
> Researcher - They think it works both ways.
> Mrs. Shaw - I was going to say both ways--conferencing helps response writing and response writing helps conferencing.

The students believed the teachers had helped them with their response writing in many ways. Every focus student noted how the teachers' written instructional comments were helpful. Four children also felt the initial lessons on response writing had been valuable and the response entry format provided assistance for three children. The mind map and mini-lessons were each mentioned once as entities which provided assistance with response writing. When asked how the teachers could provide further assistance with response writing, the students made no suggestions.

The researcher asked the teachers how they felt they assisted the children in reaching a 'good' response. The teachers felt that one of their roles was to directly teach the students about response writing. They believed their written replies to the students' responses provided assistance, as when they wrote back they tried "to model what a response should look like." However, the content of the replies examined by the researcher indicated that most of the teachers' comments were evaluative and instructional in nature and therefore were not 'models' of 'good' responses (according to the criteria explicated by the teachers). As well, every focus child stated that the teachers' written comments were helpful, as they provided feedback regarding the favourable and less favourable aspects of their work. Thus the children did not appear to view the teachers' comments as 'models' of responses.

In addition, the teachers believed their initial lessons on response writing had helped the students. The teachers also felt the mind map provided assistance to the students. They reiterated how they had modeled and practiced each response type from the mind map and subsequently had the children share their written entries in order for the students to hear others' responses. As well, Mrs. Perez explained how they would immediately deal with aspects of the students' written responses which they felt needed attention. She stated, "Lots of times, things that we talk to them about aren't even as formal as mini-lessons." In addition, the teachers mentioned how they sometimes made suggestions to the children about aspects of their responses which required attention or improvement during teacher conferences. Thus there were many commonalities between the children's and the teachers' descriptions of the ways the teachers provided assistance with response writing.

Further, the teachers felt the suggestion for students to jot down notes as they read had helped the children with their response writing. The teachers believed that this practice had given "a lot of them confidence" in responding both orally and in writing. The teachers indicated that in the forthcoming school year, they would introduce this practice earlier and model it when working on the class novel. Mrs. Perez suggested, "One of us--while one of us is reading, the other one might be jotting down some things on a wall chart. And then we would have that to talk about." Interestingly, Mrs. Shaw explained how when they initially modeled conferencing to the students, she and another individual had brought notes about the text to class. "That was something we did and yet we didn't think to tell the kids to do that because it wasn't built into the program. And so you don't think of that necessarily until--I had just done that as help to me." They noted how their experiences throughout a school year resulted in modifications or changes to various components of the program the following year.

When asked if the focus students thought they had responded to texts prior to coming to this class, all answered affirmatively, with two children qualifying their answers. One child stated she had previously responded to texts in her head, but not in writing. Another student explained how she now responded in more depth than she had before. Five of the focus children acknowledged that prior to being in this class, they had responded in many ways in their heads while reading but had been unaware of the specific terminology to label or identify the various responses they had been experiencing (i.e. terms from the mind map).

When the teachers were asked to explain their conceptualizations of response writing, they alluded to their beliefs of students' abilities to respond to texts prior to being in their class. The teachers talked about how they felt the "best form of responding...comes from within the child--they don't need the mind map, they know how to respond to the literature because they've been doing it really as they've been reading all along on their own." The teachers believed that only a few children were able to respond in this manner and that they needed to provide "tools to spark this--to get this going." Therefore the teachers had supplied the students with the mind map. Mrs. Shaw explained how they had taken the "mind map and put it together and then practice[d] all of them [the different response types] so they know what they're suppose to respond to and hopefully they can take that on their own--some kids already have that sort of in them but by having those 'tools' and going over it some helps them formulate it a little bit better." She articulated how students varied in their reliance on the mind map, noting how some took the mind map and used it as a formula and "other ones have been thinking about what they've been reading a lot longer--you know they've been doing that on their own before we ever started doing that--some of them are good at putting things into words better than others already so they are all going to do that to different degrees." Thus it seemed that the teachers believed it was necessary to 'teach' most of the children 'how to respond' to literature.

> Mrs. Perez - It was interesting last night. We are doing some report cards and evaluating and we got talking about teaching children things about literature and how much kids learn by mimicking the teacher. So the things that we say to them--and that's how they learn how to talk, how to think, how to discuss, how to respond because they don't know. They're little--some adult comes along and says we want you to respond to literature and they're going, "O.K., well this happened and then this happened and then this happened and then it was the end. Is that good?" And they don't really have an idea until its modeled for them--until they hear it. So all the time, when we read to them on the carpet or when we talk about things, when they hear how we do it, then they have an idea, "Oh, that's what you're talking about."

Mrs. Shaw felt that some of the weaker academic students needed a "formula" to follow when writing responses as "they don't know how else to do it." She also remarked how some of the weaker academic students continued to retell the plot. Mrs. Perez pointed out how they must remember each child's past performance and consider "the fact that they're getting their responses down and they're actually improving some of their sentence writing."

> Mrs. Perez - When we check their response journal, we go over the mechanics and make the little corrections but that's not what we're looking for. And I think sometimes it's easy to overlook some of the growth these weaker kids have made and the fact that they're getting this stuff down. And it might not be wonderful in quality but it's a lot better than what they were doing the previous year.

Both teachers believed the students' written responses were less formulized this year than they had been the previous two years (they had used response writing). The teachers expressed their desire to have the children respond genuinely to the literature they were reading. Mrs. Perez explained, "We're trying to train them to express the thoughts that spring into their minds as they read. And I think when they're conscious that they're examining and searching for their own thoughts, they become more thoughtful readers and they read with more purpose. And they get more out of their reading." Thus, there seemed to be some contradictions in the teachers' expectations of written responses, as ideally they wanted the children to respond genuinely; to express the thoughts they were experiencing about the texts being read. However, the initial format response and mind map seemed to constrain or limit the content of the students' responses (i.e. Mrs. Shaw stated "so that they know what to respond to").

Other Aspects of Readers' Workshop

All of the children accurately described the procedures and expectations of the various components of readers' workshop. It would seem logical that the children's understandings of the program were positively affected by the teachers' gradual introduction and the teacher-modeling of each component of readers' workshop.

Each student expressed enjoyment of the program. For five of the focus children, reading was their favourite part of readers' workshop. If given the opportunity to change any aspect of the program, four students stated they would like more time to read. One student declined the offer to make any changes and another student indicated he would like the group members to change in mid year.

Before discussing their journal entries with the researcher, the students were asked to explain the term 'quality' of responses on the evaluation sheet for independent conferences. Two children admitted they were uncertain of the meaning of this term. However, several characteristics were articulated by the focus children. According to the students, 'quality' oral responses would include explanations for their ideas, various types of responses, elaboration or discussion of particular thoughts, and avoidance of retelling the story (i.e. quality responses would include aesthetic, as opposed to efferent elements). When comparing the students' criteria for 'quality' oral responses and 'good' written responses, one child's guidelines were identical, three students' characteristics were similar, and two children's standards were very different. Overall, it seemed the aspects of including both explanations of ideas and various types of responses (i.e. mind map starters) were common to both 'quality' oral and 'good' written responses.

The teachers were also asked to explain the term 'quality' of responses. When referring to both oral and written responses, the teachers stated that the students needed to respond in different ways, to discuss plot, setting and characters, and to explain their ideas or opinions (i.e. the directions of the initial journal entry). Thus the students' criteria included two of the teachers' guidelines for 'quality' responses.

When asked to describe the three types of conferences the students engaged in, the children noted how they discussed the same types of general topics or ideas in both independent and recorded conferences. Several discussion topics were listed by the students: their opinions of the book; their favourite parts; the setting, plot, and characters; the illustrator; the illustrations; the author; and their predictions or questions. Analyses of the students' independent and recorded conferences revealed that indeed, the children conversed about similar topics in both types of conferences (although in varying degrees).

The children observed that although they did converse about similar topics in a teacher conference, the teacher's presence affected the conference (as indeed was revealed by the analyses of the data). Five of the students stated they enjoyed teacher conferences as the teacher asked probing questions and contributed her ideas and opinions. The sixth focus child asserted she enjoyed teacher conferences if the teacher had read the book. The student discussed how conference time was consumed and progress was inhibited when the group had to explain the text to the teacher.

Chapter Summary

The focus students identified three main criteria of a 'good' response: the inclusion of explanations for ideas and opinions; the use of starters from the mind map; and the discussion of plot, setting and characters. The initial entry the children had copied into their response journals outlined the necessity of incorporating these three characteristics in their responses. The teachers' main criterion of a 'good' response was the inclusion of explanations of ideas and opinions. As well, the teachers discussed the cohesiveness and the flow of the entries and the importance of using starters from the mind map in the students' written responses.

There were similarities between the students' and the teachers' criteria of a 'good' written response to literature. Consistent with past research (Hickman, 1983, 1984; McMahon, 1992; Michalak, 1977; Purves, 1973; Raphael et al., 1992), it seemed that the students had 'learned' the teachers' expectations for literature responses. Thus a triadic relationship existed in the classroom between the texts, the readers and the teachers as the teachers' perspectives and approaches had affected "what [wa]s valued in responding" by the children (Beach, 1993, p. 155).

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

In this chapter, the guiding questions of the study have been used as a framework to summarize some of the findings of the research. Implications for instruction and further research are discussed, and finally a few concluding statements bring closure to the dissertation.

The Findings of the Study

The purpose of the research was to provide insights about teachers' and students' perceptions of written responses to literature. Some of the main findings of the research project have been organized according to the questions outlined in chapter one.

1. What are the students' and teachers' conceptualizations of response writing?

To the focus children, writing responses meant expressing their ideas, thoughts or feelings about the books they were reading. In general, the content of the students' journal entries reflected their beliefs of the meaning of 'response writing'. It seemed there were three main factors which influenced the focus children's decisions regarding the content to include in their entries: parts of the texts they liked; ideas from their last day's reading; and starters from the mind map.

When asked to explain their conceptualizations of response writing, the teachers stated that they felt the "best form of responding...comes from within the child--they don't need the mind map, they know how to respond to the literature because they've been doing it really as they've been reading all along on their own." They believed that only a few children in the class were able to respond in this manner and that they needed to provide "tools to spark this--to get this going." The teachers consequently had supplied the students with the mind map. Mrs. Shaw explained how they practiced the different response types from the mind map with the children so they knew "what they're suppose to respond to and hopefully they can take that on their own--some kids already have that sort of in them but by having those 'tools' and going over it some helps them formulate it a little bit better." She observed that students varied in their reliance on the mind map noting how some took the mind map, and used it as a formula and others have "been thinking about what they've been reading a lot longer--they've been doing that on their own before we ever started doing that." Thus it seemed that the teachers believed it was necessary to 'teach' most of the children 'how to respond' to literature.

Interestingly, when asked if the students thought they had responded to texts prior to coming to this class, all answered affirmatively, with two of the focus children qualifying their answers in the interviews. One student stated she had previously responded to texts in her head, but not in writing. Another student explained how she now responded in more depth than she had before. Five of the focus children acknowledged that prior to being in this class, they had responded in many ways in their heads while reading but had been unaware of the specific terminology to label or identify the various responses they had been experiencing (i.e. terms from the mind map).

2. **What are the students' and teachers' beliefs of the characteristics which constitute a 'good' response?**
3. **What are the relationships between teachers' and students'**

perceptions and expectations of response writing?

Before examining their response journals and selecting specific entries to discuss with the researcher, the students stated that a 'good' response included explanations of ideas and opinions, incorporated the mind map starters, avoided retelling the story, and used correct mechanics. After the students examined and discussed their responses, they articulated fewer criteria of a 'good' response. All of the focus children intimated that a 'good' response should include explanations of ideas. Five students discussed the importance of using the starters from the mind map and three students emphasized the necessity of discussing plot, setting and characters in a 'good' response.

As the teachers examined and discussed the students' written responses, it seemed they utilized three main criteria when judging the entries: the inclusion of explanation of ideas; the use of the starters from the mind map; and the cohesiveness or flow of the entry. As well, the teachers verbalized several other reasons for judging specific student's entries positively. It appeared that the teachers considered the children's abilities and previous work when they evaluated the students' journal entries. Although the content of the responses appeared to be the focus, the teachers also stressed the importance of correct mechanical aspects.

During the last interview with the teachers, the researcher directly asked them to articulate their beliefs about the characteristics of a 'good' response. They stated the necessity for students to explain their answers, to respond in different ways, and to discuss plot, setting and characters. Thus the teachers' answers were consistent with the directions of the initial response entry the children had copied in their journals. However, when discussing the students' actual written responses, the teachers seldom referred to the guideline of responding to plot, setting and characters as a criterion of a 'quality' response. Therefore the teachers' remarks about their expectations regarding the discussion of plot, setting and characters in the students' written responses seemed to be somewhat inconsistent. As well, there seemed to be an inherent contradiction in the fact that the teachers expressed concern about "formulizing" the students' responses yet had outlined specific instructions for the children to follow when writing responses (i.e. the initial journal entry).

The three criteria explicated by the teachers were identical to the three main aspects articulated by the children in their descriptions of 'good' responses. Thus it seemed that the students had learned the teachers' expectations for written literature responses.

The children identified various areas for improvement in their written responses. When discussing their specific journal entries, five children mentioned mechanical aspects and four noted the need for explanations of ideas and opinions. The importance of writing about more than one part of a book was mentioned by three students. When asked how their responses could be improved overall, the children articulated the need to improve their writing mechanics; explain their answers; and discuss plot, setting and characters. Two students mentioned the importance of including sufficient content and using more ideas from the mind map.

Specific elements of the written responses were repeatedly referred to by the students in their discussions of both the favourable and less favourable aspects of their work. The focus children identified explanations of ideas as very important. The students also conveyed the necessity of using the starters from the mind map and of discussing plot, setting and characters. The three main characteristics identified by the children were not surprising as the directions of the initial response entry the students had copied into their journals were, "I must remember to respond in different ways using my mind map, and comment on plot, character and setting. I must be sure to give reasons for my responses."

When the children discussed areas for improvement, a recurring factor was the mechanical aspects of writing, including spelling, handwriting, and format. The latter may be explained by the teachers' instructional and evaluative comments written in the students' journals which addressed those facets. As well, the teachers would often mark incorrect mechanical aspects in the students' responses.

The teachers noted several areas in the children's responses which required improvement. For five students, the teachers saw the need for explanations of ideas and opinions. It appeared the teachers wanted the students to extend their responses and further their thinking by providing supportive content for their ideas and opinions. For three children, the teachers articulated the importance of concentrating and exerting a better effort. The teachers stated that these particular students needed to stay on task and use their time more effectively during readers' workshop.

In discussing both the favourable and less favourable aspects of the students' responses, the main criterion emphasized by the teachers was the necessity of including explanations of ideas and opinions. This aspect was repeatedly referred to by the students as well. In addition, the teachers commented upon the cohesiveness and flow of the entries, and the importance of using the starters from the mind map in their discussions of the students' responses. The children also talked about the mind map but they did not mention the cohesiveness of their entries. Interestingly, when identifying areas requiring improvement, the teachers did not stress usage of the mind map nor discussion of plot, setting and characters (two criteria of 'quality' responses they had articulated previously).

4. Are there teaching strategies or methods used to assist children in 'extending' or 'improving' their responses?

The focus children believed the teachers had helped them with their response writing in many ways. Every focus student noted how the teachers' written instructional comments were helpful. Four children also felt the initial lessons on response writing had been valuable. The response entry format provided assistance for three children. The mind map and mini-lessons were each mentioned once by individual focus students as entities which provided assistance with response writing. When asked how the teachers could provide further assistance with response writing, the children made no suggestions.

The researcher asked the teachers how they felt they assisted the children in developing a 'good' response. The teachers felt that one of their roles was to directly teach the students about response writing. They believed their written replies to the students' responses provided assistance, as when they wrote back they tried "to model what a response should look like." However, the content of the teachers' replies examined by the researcher indicated that most of their comments were evaluative and instructional in nature and therefore were not 'models' of 'good' responses (according to the criteria outlined by the teachers). As well, every focus child stated that the teachers' written comments were helpful as they provided feedback regarding the favourable and less favourable aspects of their work. Thus the children did not appear to view the teachers' comments as 'models' of responses.

In addition, the teachers believed their initial lessons on response writing had helped the students. The teachers also felt the mind map provided the children assistance with response writing. As well, Mrs. Perez explained how they would immediately deal with aspects of the students' written responses which they felt needed attention. Further, the teachers mentioned how they sometimes discussed aspects of the children's responses which required attention or improvement during teacher conferences. Thus there were many similarities between the children's and the teachers' descriptions of the ways the teachers provided assistance with response writing.

5. What are teachers expecting from and teaching by using literature and literary response?

The teachers stated that they wanted the children to develop a love of reading. They believed the students would experience the enjoyment and magic of children's literature and hence be motivated to read more. As well, they felt children's literature facilitated "strategies for reading in the real world" and provided material for stimulating discussion. They also believed children's literature allowed the students to "go deeper into the material than just knowledge and comprehension levels."

The children expressed sincere enjoyment in reading children's literature. Five of the focus students stated that reading was their favourite part of readers' workshop and four expressed a desire for more time to read.

Children's literature was used in the classroom in both efferent and aesthetic ways. It seemed that the teachers were stressing the importance of literary elements in children's literature. They expected the children to respond to plot, setting and characters in both their written responses and conferences. During the teacher conferences, the teachers posed many questions which specifically addressed the latter literary elements. In some respects, the literature was 'basalized' as the children were to evaluate plot, setting and characters and present summaries of the texts for their book shares.

In addition, as the teachers had not read all of the books, many of the conferences resembled 'mini-inquisitions' as a result of the large number of questions directed at literal textual aspects. As stated previously, the teachers believed children's literature allowed the students to "go deeper into the material than just knowledge and comprehension levels" but many of the teachers' questions focused on surface level understandings of texts. Research has found that often "it is the teacher's questions and the teacher's expectations of student action that shape the cultural frame for student's responses" (Hade, 1992, p. 198). Perhaps the students interpreted the purpose of the teachers' questions to determine their knowledge of texts rather than to discover their thoughts or feelings about texts. As well, the children may have inferred that the teachers' questions were aimed at discovering what the the books were about.

The teachers also facilitated personal engagement responses (i.e. aesthetic responses) during their teacher conferences. Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw used children's literature as a medium for personal response as students were to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions about texts. Thus the teachers seemed to use children's literature for diverse and theoretically disparate reasons.

There also seemed to be contradictions in the teachers' expectations and teachings of literary response. The teachers stated that they wanted the children to articulate their personal opinions, feelings and ideas about the literature. Indeed, the mind map starters seemed to encourage personal responses. However, the teachers did not write about their personal evocations of texts (i.e. they did not model response writing) in their replies to the students' responses. Rather, overwhelmingly, their replies contained evaluative and instructional comments about the children's entries. In addition, the teachers often corrected or indicated mechanical errors in the written responses, a practice criticized by other researchers (Fulps & Young, 1991).

As well, it seemed that Mrs. Perez and Mrs. Shaw wanted the children to develop or extend their evocations of texts as they emphasized the importance of the students providing explanations of their ideas and opinions in both their oral and written responses. However, it appeared that the children did not fully understand the meaning of 'including explanations of ideas'. Although the phrase "explain my/your ideas" was verbalized numerous times by both students and teachers (when they critiqued book shares, wrote replies to the children's journal responses, conferenced with the students, and conducted a mini-lesson), no one explained the meaning of the phrase beyond "I need to use becauses," and "Remember to give your reasons." Perhaps the teachers were uncertain of specific teaching practices and behaviours which would encourage extended responses.

When asked to articulate their reasons for having the children write responses to the novels they read, the teachers stated they felt that writing about texts would positively influence the students' understandings of books (which would then affect the students' enjoyment of reading). As well, the teachers thought that writing about texts clarified thinking. Further, they felt that response writing equipped students with 'tools' they would need later on in school and life. In addition, the journal entries provided "data for parents and teachers" which could be evaluated. Finally, Mrs. Perez explained how response writing provided a medium for the children "to develop the ability to express themselves in a standard conventional written form that is legible to someone else who might want to know what they're thinking."

Five of the focus children believed their teachers had them write responses in order to discover each individual's thoughts or opinions or feelings about the texts. The teachers were surprised by the students' beliefs about why they were writing literature responses. Upon hearing some of the students' ideas, the teachers discussed how they should explicitly inform the students of their reasons for having them write responses.

Thus there seemed to be contradictory evidence surrounding the question, "What are teachers expecting and teaching by using literature and literary response?" Research has demonstrated that teachers occupy a salient role in facilitating literary response (Hickman, 1983, 1984; McMahon, 1992; Michalak, 1977; Purves, 1973; Raphael et al., 1992). Research examining aesthetic and efferent teaching styles by Many and Wiseman (1992b) clearly illustrated how students learned (and replicated) what the teachers 'showed' as opposed to what the teachers 'said'. Unknowingly and unintentionally practitioners may teach behaviours and strategies which are inappropriate and/or inconsistent with their beliefs. As their actions may also reflect their tacit beliefs and assumptions, it is important for teachers to critically examine the theoretical bases of their conduct. As Fish stated, "not only does one believe what one believes but one teaches what one believes" (1980, p. 364). The researcher's comments are not intended to criticize the teachers in the study. Rather, the incongruities between the teachers' comments and practices emphasize the difficulties inherent in embracing new practices and fully understanding the implications of them. Educators need to examine and reflect on their theoretical beliefs and practices in an ongoing and systematic manner.

Implications for Instruction

The children in the study expressed sincere enjoyment in and appreciation of reading literature. As outlined in chapter two, the multiple benefits of using children's literature in classrooms have been well documented. As well, the focus students communicated pleasure in selecting their own books to read. Educators need to continue the pedagogical practices of using children's literature as the core of their reading programs and providing students with opportunities to self-select quality literary works. "Works of genuine literary quality can evoke richer, more meaningful experience than...'pseudo-literature'" (Squire, 1990, p. 19). In addition, writing and talking about literature provided the students in the research classroom occasions to foster their understandings, to construct and articulate their interpretations, and to muse others' exegeses of literary works. Pedagogues need to provide children opportunities "to share their own understandings of a text" and "help students learn to build richer ones through the exploration of possibilities" (Langer, 1992, p. 38). Further, educators' classroom practices will reflect their growing theoretical understandings of how writing and talking about books are linked to constructing, discovering and extending meaning, the central goals of responding. Teachers need to recognize that implementing a reader-response approach to teaching literature is a complex process which evolves and changes over time due to a myriad of factors (i.e. reader, teacher, text and context).

This research project demonstrated how the children's responses to literature were affected by the instructional context. Beach (1993) stated that "responding is a learned social process" (p. 104). It is imperative for teachers and researchers to be cognizant of and reflective about their theoretical beliefs, as the latter will affect their expectations of and approaches to the use of literature and response writing. Teachers can acculturate readers into habits of reading and styles or preferences of responding. "In considering the effects of social contexts on responses, it is important to recognize that, as a social context, the classroom is infused with pedagogical intent, that teachers deliberately create contexts to foster certain kinds of learning" (Beach, 1993, p. 104). Thus teachers "must become more aware of the ways [they]...signal students to conform to preferred modes of behavior and response within the classroom interpretive community" (Hynds, 1992, p. 96).

Through social interactions in the classroom, children learn particular ways of reading, talking, and writing about literature. Teachers need to be cognizant of the ramifications of the types of social interactions they facilitate or model in their classrooms. Vygotsky (1978) argued that external or socialized speech is turned inward. When children "organize their own activities according to a social form of behaviour," they have internalized social speech (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 27). "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (*interpsychological*), and then inside the child (*intrapsychological*)...All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). As social interactions affect how children respond to and think about literature, educators need to be concerned about both the form and content of the interactions occurring in classrooms. For example, what are children internalizing about literature and literary response when they are required to respond to plot, setting and characters? Rather, teachers need to legitimate and expedite students' aesthetic responses to literature where the reader's "main purpose is to participate as fully as possible in the potentialities of the the text" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 69). Students need opportunities to reflect on their literary experiences - "a reexperiencing, a reenacting, of the work-as-evoked, and an ordering and elaborating" of their responses to it (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 134). Teachers need to create or facilitate contexts in which the latter types of interactions can occur (which according to Vygotsky will then result in children internalizing ways of thinking about and responding to literature).

The effects of classroom social interactions demonstrate the influence of the classroom interpretive community. What is talked about in an interpretive community affects what is thought and written about. The teacher has been found to be the most influential member in the classroom interpretive community (Hickman, 1983, 1984). Students learn to "fit their responses within the accepted conventions of a particular classroom interpretive community" (Hynds, 1992, p. 90). The stance and "role a teacher adopts...invites students to adopt reciprocal roles" (Beach, 1993, p. 109). If teachers adopt the role of 'questioner' in conferences and in reply to students' written responses, then the children will react accordingly. However, if teachers adopt the role of 'fellow reader and responder', then they encourage a classroom context for "extension and elaboration of an aesthetic experience with a literary text" (DeLawter, 1992, p. 111). Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to read the literature they use in their programs in order to genuinely write about and discuss texts. The "quality of students' response - their willingness to explore and extend their response - depends heavily on teachers' own willingness to themselves engage in thoughtful, engrossing conversations" (Beach, 1993, p.118). Further, teachers' questioning patterns may tacitly or unconsciously suggest the roles to be assumed by children when they read and respond (i.e. submitting to textual authority or constructing and interpreting meaning based on the blueprint of the text).

Teachers' theoretical beliefs affect the content of students' responses as educators' assumptions shape their practice and drive their teaching of literature. "In their zeal to elicit engagement responses, teachers need to be careful not to dictate how to respond, thus undermining students' own motivation to explore their responses" (Beach, 1993, p. 59). Response starters and/or formats can constrain and impede students' aesthetic responses of their lived-through experiences of literary works. As well, teachers' responses can serve as models of aesthetic responses illustrating how they have extended their personal evocations of texts. Further, addressing and correcting students' mechanical errors can communicate messages about the stance to be assumed when writing journal entries and the purposes of literature responses. As Fulps and Young stated, "Much of the success (and failure) of reading responses lies with the teacher and the teacher's response to what the students have written" (1991, p. 113).

Research by Cox and Many (1992b) indicated that when fifth-grade students were allowed to respond freely to books and films, they responded aesthetically most of the time. The focus children in this study seemed to indicate that they had responded aesthetically to texts prior to being in Mrs. Perez's and Mrs. Shaw's class. Thus instead of teachers believing they need to 'teach' children how to respond to literature, practitioners need to contextualize the process of response by capitalizing upon students' response experiences. We are continuously responding to music, films, T.V. shows, books, news reports, sounds, smells, conversations, etc. Those experiences can serve as the bases to exemplify and communicate to students the meaning and process of 'response'. Many and Wiseman write that it is the "responding *process* which should be emphasized when encouraging students to interact with literature" (1992b, p. 271).

Zarrillo and Cox (1992) outline three reasons to support teaching from an aesthetic stance. As stated previously, research has demonstrated that students assume an aesthetic stance when allowed to respond freely, which "implies a lack of fit with the more efferent teaching of literature in schools" (Cox & Many, 1992c, p. 116). Higher levels of interpretation and understanding have been associated with aesthetic responses to literature (Cox & Many, 1992a, 1992b). Secondly, Zarrillo and Cox state that "aesthetic teaching is consistent with how children learn" (p. 247) as reading, like learning, involves a process of active construction of meaning. Children draw upon their reservoir of background knowledge to actively construct meaning of their new experiences.

Interpretation of experiences, be they life or literary, involve both cognition (prior knowledge) and emotion (feelings). Thirdly, Zarrillo and Cox believe that "aesthetic teaching defines an appropriate relationship between children and books. Literature is art, able to entertain and enlighten" (p. 247). Teaching from an aesthetic stance encourages students to consider the secondary or possible worlds of literature, to selectively attend to their personal evocations, and to subsequently respond to their lived-through experiences of the literary work.

Teachers need to reflect upon and be reflexive about their conceptualizations, expectations and instruction in response writing. Since instruction affects response writing, teachers need to reflect upon their practices and critically examine the content of students' responses. In assessing children's responses, teachers need to ask themselves if they are encouraging or facilitating or modeling responses which deepen or extend students' reading experiences. Cooper suggests that it is possible to evaluate whether readers are "improving in their ability to...widen and vary the patterns of their expressed responses and to organize and develop their expressed responses in increasingly sophisticated ways" (1985, p. 308). There is an exigency for teachers to develop strategies which "refine and develop" students' responses (Britton, 1968, p. 4). The latter statement does not mean that unsophisticated responses (however they are defined) are "bad currency" that teachers "seek to drive out" but rather they are the "tender shoots that must be fostered" (Britton, 1968, p. 4).

Teachers need to consider other issues surrounding written responses to literature as well. For example, how often should students write responses or how many responses should a child write for a novel? If children read a limited amount of text since their last entry, how realistic is it for teachers to expect students to write another 'extended' response? The same argument can be used with literature discussions. If children read 10-12 pages a day, how tenable is it for teachers to expect students to engage in daily conferences for 20 minutes where they engage in 'deep' discussions? Many children in the research classroom commented upon frequently experiencing a lack of content (i.e. "ideas") to both discuss and write about.

One of the main goals of a language arts program should be to develop/encourage/facilitate a love of reading. Children should engage in 'real reading behaviours' in school (e.g. select their own books to read, read daily for significant amounts of time, and set their own reading goals). Excessive response writing and conferencing may, in fact, detract from the authenticity and enjoyment of reading literature.

When forming reading groups, teachers need to be aware of the differences in students' abilities to genuinely 'discuss literature'. The children in this study were organized into academically homogeneous groups. The groups differed distinctively in their abilities to discuss the literature and in the depth of their discussions. Perhaps, those groups more adept at engaging in the process of "expatiation" during reading conferences could model or audio-record discussions for other students. As well, the groups could be varied throughout the year so that those students who were more able to both share and build richer understandings and exegeses of texts could work with those who were less adept at conferencing. Further, teachers and students need to recognize that conferencing is 'hard work' and that more than a 'good book' is required to have a stimulating discussion. Past research has indicated the need for teachers to model, teach and reinforce appropriate conference behaviours (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Villaume & Worden, 1993).

Although the researcher did not specifically examine the effects of individual texts, the focus children believed some books were easier to respond to. Other research has found that specific texts influenced the content of students' responses (Cox & Many, 1992b; Galda, 1992; Hancock, 1993b; Studier, 1978). The focus children indicated that their emotional engagement with novels significantly affected their perceived ease of responding. Therefore, discovering students' reading interests can assist teachers in providing literature which will be of high interest. As well, teachers need to provide a wide variety of 'quality' literature from which the students may choose. Hopefully, quality literature which is of high interest to children will encourage aesthetic reading and positively influence students' written responses and conferences. (The latter statement is made with the recognition that quality literature is one of the myriad of factors which affect literary response.) As well, it is imperative for teachers to read the literature they recommend and use in order for them to authentically respond to the texts (both orally and in writing).

There were several instances throughout the study when the teachers were surprised by the students' perspectives and understandings of classroom practices. The latter illustrates the importance for teachers to explicitly state their purposes and to check (by talking with the students and observing their work) if indeed the children understand what they are doing and why. Teachers can learn a great deal by listening to students. Common understandings and expectations may further students' experiences with literature and literary response.

With regards to children's literature and literary response, there seemed to be discrepancies in what the teachers believed they needed to teach, what they assumed they were teaching and what they actually were teaching (as evident from the data of the teacher conferences, the teachers' written replies to the students' responses, and the children's answers to the interview questions). It would seem logical that the instructional context and methods they used reflected the teachers' knowledge of and beliefs about children's literature and literary response, and their roles in education and in children's lives. It would seem that the teachers needed to engage in professional reading to augment their knowledge base and instructional repertoires of why and how children's literature and literary response can (and should) be used in classrooms (i.e. some of the material presented in the literature review). The latter has larger ramifications as the two teachers were conducting workshops for other educators about how to structure a reading program using children's literature.

Implications For Further Research

The findings of this study extended the literature on written responses to literature by exploring students' and teachers' beliefs about the characteristics which constitute a 'good' response. As well, the study examined students' and teachers' conceptualizations and perceptions of response writing. Further, the research project provided additional information about teachers' influences on children's written responses to literature. The findings of the study suggest several implications for future research.

It is important for further studies to be holistic - where "readers and their responses to literature" are studied in their social units - in classrooms (Webb, 1985, p. 283). This study clearly demonstrated how teachers can directly affect students' experiences with literature and literary responses. Research can continue to examine the "relationships among the nature of literary understandings and the instructional contexts in which such understandings develop" (Purves, 1992, p. 51). As readers learn preferred ways of reading, thinking and writing about literature, research needs to continue to investigate the evolution of interpretive communities in classrooms and explore the dynamics within them.

The research project evinced how pedagogues' beliefs affect their use of literary response and children's literature. The teachers' conceptions of the roles of literature and literary response in the curriculum and in life were evident by their comments and teaching practices. It would seem valuable to explore the reading biographies of practitioners to examine possible relationships between their teaching practices and their idosyncractic ways of thinking about and reading literature. Zancanella states that "because the teacher's voice speaks loudly in determining what counts as the teaching and learning of literature in a given classroom, understanding the teacher's 'literary life' is of special importance" (1992, p. 220). Researchers could investigate the influence of teacher biography on the use of literature and literary response in classrooms. The examination of teachers' formal and informal literary educations may provide insights into their classroom practices.

The teachers in this study utilized certain teaching practices in their instruction of literary response. Other research could examine the effects of classroom practitioners' teaching practices on children's written responses to literature. Inquiry into how teachers foster growth of the "tender shoots" of written responses would be another area worthy of investigation. In addition, studies have examined differences between efferent and aesthetic teaching (Many & Wiseman, 1992a, 1992b). Perhaps other research could utilize the so-called "aesthetic teaching" practices articulated by Zarrillo and Cox (1992) and determine if these particular strategies facilitated aesthetic responses.

To a certain extent this study investigated an area which Rosenblatt identified as requiring further research. She stated, "One factor deserves particular study: the effect of the teacher's own understanding of the theoretical basis for the fact that - although there is no one single 'correct' interpretation - there can be developed criteria of validity of interpretation. Clarification of the criteria that are being applied...is the basis for critical communication (1985b, p. 49). Future research could explore teachers' theoretical beliefs as well as the relationships between the latter and their criteria of validity of interpretation.

Other teachers and children can be queried about their understandings and expectations of response writing. As well, they can be asked to articulate their criteria of a 'good' response and to identify responses which they feel are quality entries. Teachers can compare their expectations for and criteria of 'good' responses with those articulated by their students (and other professional sources). As well, the rich data provided by discovering teachers' and students' perceptions and expectations of response writing may assist educators and researchers in their understandings of developmental and instructional issues surrounding response. Adults can learn a great deal by listening to children's views about, and understandings of, response to literature.

Research could also investigate whether those students whose written responses were extended and sophisticated were indeed writing about their lived-through experiences of texts. The latter raises methodological questions. Protocol analysis can provide information of readers' textual transactions but continual interruptions of students' reading may interfere with the authenticity of the reading event. However, it seems worthy for teachers and researchers to discover the degree that responding **after** reading authentically indicates "what actually transpired during the reading event" (Cox & Many, 1992c, p. 119).

The present study examined students' responses over a four month period. Another area which could be explored by research is the development or maturation of student responses over a longer period of time. The latter could provide valuable information to teachers which could then affect their instruction and expectations. As Rosenblatt (1985b) stated "research could do much to elucidate the kinds of evidence that might signal growth in quality of transactions with texts" (p. 50).

The teachers in this study generally wrote evaluative and instructional comments in their replies to the students' responses. Research could examine the effects on children's written responses when teachers model 'quality' aesthetic responses - responses which protray both emotional involvement and distanced reflection.

Some studies have investigated the effects of teacher behaviours on student interactions in literature discussions (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Villaume & Worden, 1993). Further research could explore the effects of teachers assuming the role of 'fellow reader' in conferences. Research could examine the content of the discussions and determine if indeed the participants were creating and extending their personal experiences of the literary works when teachers' responses were centered on their personal evocations of texts. As

Rosenblatt stated, "Much remains to be done through study of classroom dynamics to discover how the teacher's guidance (without domination) of group discussions can contribute to growth in students' ability to handle and reflect on their transactions with texts" (1985b, p. 49).

The children in this study were organized into academically homogeneous reading groups. There were definite differences amongst the groups in their abilities to 'discuss' literature and in the depth of their discussions. Further research could explore the discussions of reading groups organized both homogeneously and heterogeneously (academically).

This study did not examine the possible relationships between the ideas and opinions discussed in conferences and those written in students' responses. Future research could investigate if indeed students wrote about what they talked about. As well, the depth of the discussions of the oral and written responses could be examined and compared.

Another area which is worthy of further research is the exploration of how specific texts affect response. The students in this study stated that some books were easier to respond to than others. Research could investigate the types of books children identified as easy and difficult to respond to. In addition, the students' responses (both oral and written) to books identified as easy and difficult to respond to could be analyzed and compared. Perhaps Barthes's notions of 'writerly' and 'readerly' texts could be explored as well (Corcoran, 1992; Meek, 1988). Barthes calls texts where readers must do half of the work 'writerly' texts. "The range of structures" in 'writerly' texts force readers "to take an active role in textualization" (Corcoran, 1992, p. 54), while 'readerly' texts are those with few opportunities for readers to actively interrogate and produce texts. Research could examine if those texts identified by readers as easier to respond to were indeed 'writerly' texts (some criteria or definition of the latter would need to be further specified).

Interestingly, nearly thirty years after the Dartmouth Conference, many of the conference's recommendations regarding the role and use of literature and literary response in education still remain prominent and unresolved issues.

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout history, various literary theoretical orientations have been popular, and the embracing of a particular theory by theorists and educators has had significant pedagogical implications. It is imperative for teachers to be cognizant of and reflexive about their theoretical beliefs as the latter will affect their expectations of and approaches to the use of literature and response writing (as well as reading and instruction in general). As McGee states, through "reflection on theory and the relationships between theory and practice we can better" understand "our definitions of and goals for literature-based reading instruction" (1992, p. 536). Since students' responses are affected by teachers' instruction of literature and literary response, "we must emphasize in schooling the kinds of responses we think most important to develop for a lifetime" (Squire, 1990, p. 21).

To a certain extent, a similar trend seems to be occurring with the use of children's literature and literary response in elementary classrooms as happened with the whole language movement - a lack of understanding. One reason teachers have experienced difficulties implementing the 'whole language' philosophy is that numerous definitions of whole language abound in